

QUESTION OF THE WEEK**Q:** What is the best over-the-counter remedy for a headache?

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Many people suffer from headaches on an occasional basis. The most common types are muscle tension headaches, caused by spasm of the muscles around the outside of the skull. But there are also many people who suffer from headaches caused by dilation of the blood vessels in the head. These "vascular" headaches are given names such as "migraines" or "cluster headaches" by physicians. Sinus problems are another common cause of headaches. Usually, sinus headaches and vascular headaches will need evaluation and treatment prescribed by a physician.

Muscle tension headaches can frequently be relieved by over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen, aspirin, or ibuprofen. Scalp massage and/or cold packs or ice packs may provide relief. However, if a headache occurs after head trauma, or is severe or prolonged, or recurring, or if the headache is associated with a change in vision, speech, confusion, mental status, or weakness or numbness in part of your body, or fever or nausea and vomiting, then you should consult your physician immediately.

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