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SymptomsCausesRisk factorsDiagnosisTreatmentOutlookExertional headaches are headaches triggered by some type of physical activity. The types of activity that cause them vary from person to person, but include:strenuous exercisecoughingsexual activityDoctors divide exertional headaches into two categories, depending on their cause:Primary exertional headache. This type is brought on solely by physical activity and is usually harmless.Secondary exertional headache. This type is brought on by physical activity due to an underlying condition, such as a tumor or coronary artery disease. Read on to learn more about exertional headaches, including how to recognize whether yours is primary or secondary.The main symptom of an exertional headache is moderate to severe pain that people often describe as throbbing. You might feel it across your entire head or just on one side. They can start during or after strenuous physical activity.Primary exertional headaches can last anywhere from five minutes to two days, while secondary exertional headaches can last for several days.Depending on the cause, secondary exertional headaches sometimes have additional symptoms, including:vomitingneck stiffnessdouble visionloss of consciousnessPrimary exertional headaches are often triggered by:intense exercise, such as running, weightlifting, or rowingsexual activity, especially orgasmcoughingsneezingstraining during bowel movementsHowever, experts aren't sure why these activities cause a headache. It might be related to the narrowing of blood vessels within the skull that happens during physical activity.Secondary exertional headaches are triggered by the same activities as primary exertional headaches are. However, this response to physical activity is due to an underlying condition, such as:subarachnoid hemorrhage, which is bleeding between the brain and the tissues covering the braintumorscoronary artery disease that affects blood vessels leading to or within your brainsinus infectionstructural abnormalities of the head, neck, or spineobstruction of flow of cerebrospinal fluidOther things that increase your risk of having an exertional headache include:exercising in hot weatherexercising at a high altitudehaving a history of migraineshaving a family history of migrainesTo diagnose an exertional headache, your doctor will likely start by asking about your symptoms and the kinds of things that tend to cause them. Make sure to tell them about any specific activities that seem to give you a headache.Depending on your symptoms and medical history, they might also use some imaging tests to check for an underlying issue.Imaging tests used to diagnose exertional headaches include:CT scan to check for recent bleeding in or around the brainMRI scan to view the structures within your brainmagnetic resonance angiography and CT angiography to see the blood vessels leading into your brainspinal tap to measure the flow of cerebrospinal fluidTreatment for exertional headaches depends on whether your headaches are primary or secondary. Secondary exertional headaches usually go away once you treat the underlying cause.Primary exertional headaches usually respond well to traditional headache treatments, including nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories such as ibuprofen (Advil). If these don't provide relief, your doctor might prescribe a different type of medication.Medications used to treat exertional headaches include:If your headaches are predictable, you may only need to take medication before doing activities that you know might trigger a headache. If they aren't predictable, you may need to take medication regularly to prevent them.For some people, gradually warming up before doing any strenuous exercise also helps. If you're a runner, for example, try dedicating more time to warming up your body and gradually building up your speed.For headaches triggered by sexual activities, having less strenuous sex more often may help.Primary exertional headaches are frustrating but usually harmless. However, they can sometimes be a sign of an underlying condition that needs treatment, so it's important to follow up with your doctor about your symptoms.Once you've ruled out any other causes, a combination of changes to your physical activity and over-the-counter or prescription medication will likely provide relief. Exercise-related headaches typically cause throbbing pain on both sides of your head. Exercise headaches can develop either after you finish a tough workout or while you're exercising. Both aerobic exercises (such as running and biking) and weightlifting can trigger them. They also can occur at other times, like when you:Cough or sneezeHave sexStrain on the toiletThere are two types of exercise headaches:Primary exercise headacheUsually harmless, primary exercise headaches aren't a sign that there's anything wrong with your health. Experts don't know why they happen, but it may be due to the widening of the blood vessels in your brain when you exercise. They can last as little as 5 minutes or as long as 2 days.Secondary exercise headacheThese exercise headaches signal that something's wrong, often something serious. The headache itself feels similar to a primary exercise headache — throbbing pain on both sides of your head — but other symptoms also may occur, including:VomitingPassing outDouble visionStiffness in your neck These headaches, which usually last at least a day and can continue for several days, may be caused by:Subarachnoid hemorrhage, or bleeding between the brain and arachnoid (the middle of three layers of tissue that surround your brain). This is a medical emergency.An abnormality in a blood vessel in your brain or in a blood vessel that supplies blood to your brain.A tumor, either malignant (cancerous) or benign (noncancerous)An obstruction in the flow of cerebrospinal fluid, which cushions and nourishes your brain and spinal cord.A sinus infection.A structural problem in your head, neck, or spine.What is an exertion headache?Exertion headache is another name for an exercise headache. Primary exercise headaches used to be called primary exertional headaches or benign exertional headaches. Exercise-related headaches typically cause throbbing pain on both sides of your head. Exercise headaches can develop either after you finish a tough workout or while you're exercising. Both aerobic exercises (such as running and biking) and weightlifting can trigger them. (Photo Credit: E+/Getty Images) Though the reasons for your post-workout headache might not always be clear, there are several possibilities.Exertion headacheAnother name for exercise headache, these may be triggered by temporary changes to the blood vessels in your brain during exercise. When you work out, your body, including your brain, has higher demands for oxygen-rich blood. Your blood vessels widen to allow more blood to flow through them. It's possible that when the blood vessels in your brain widen, they create pressure in your skull, leading to a headache. Headaches and dehydrationYou become dehydrated when your body loses more water than it takes in. That can happen during exercise or other physical activity if you sweat heavily and drink too little fluid to make up for what you've lost. Dehydration causes your brain to shrink and pull away from your skull. That puts painful pressure on your nerves, triggering a headache after exercise. You can ease the pain by drinking water or other fluids.Electrolyte imbalanceElectrolytes are minerals, such as potassium, calcium, and sodium, that play important roles in your health. You get most of them from your diet. They balance the fluids in your body, keep your heart beating normally, and help your nerves and muscles function properly. Your electrolytes can become unbalanced by exercise because they leave your body when you sweat. An exercise headache is just one symptom of an electrolyte imbalance. Other symptoms include:ConfusionConstipation or diarrheaFast or erratic heartbeat (called an arrhythmia)FatigueIrritabilityMuscle discomfort, such as cramps, spasms, or weaknessNausea and vomitingNumbness Low blood sugarGlucose, or blood sugar, provides most of the energy needed to power your body, including your brain. You can burn through it during your workout. When you have low blood sugar, a condition called hypoglycemia, you may develop a headache. Hypoglycemia is much more common in people who have diabetes. Juice, regular (not diet) soda, and other sugary drinks or foods can quickly restore your blood sugar. If your workout is super intense, though, the opposite can happen — activities such as heavy weightlifting, sprinting, and competitive sports raise your adrenaline, which in turn causes a spike in your blood sugar, which is called hyperglycemia. This, too, can cause an exercise headache.Headache from overexertionYou can exert yourself physically in ways other than exercise and end up with a headache. These headaches typically develop when you engage your abdominal (stomach) muscles or increase pressure in your chest. This can happen in several situations, such as:Straining when you poopLifting heavy thingsCoughing and sneezingHaving sex These headaches usually don't last more than a few minutes. However, if you keep up the exertion, the headache can get worse and last longer.Heat exhaustionYour body has a built-in cooling system that produces sweat when your body temperature rises above normal. This happens during exercise. If your body can't cool itself enough, your increased temperature can trigger heat exhaustion.One symptom is, you guessed it, a headache. Other symptoms of heat exhaustion include:Dizziness or faintingFast heartbeatLoss of coordinationMild, short-lived confusionMuscle cramps or weaknessNausea and vomitingRapid breathingSweating heavilyYou're more likely to experience heat exhaustion if you are dehydrated as well. Other contributing factors include:Being out of shapeDrinking alcohol before exerciseObesityWorking out in a hot environment that you're not used toCertain medications and health conditions also can make heat exhaustion more likely. Ask your doctor whether your current health and prescriptions could put you at risk. Environmental factorsWorking out in certain conditions can also make an exercise headache more likely. These include:A hot and humid settingHigh altitudes if you're not used to itPlaces with strong odors from chemicals, such as cleaning products, or perfumesOutdoors if you're sensitive to allergens such as pollen, which can cause hay fever headachesSmoke from incense, which some yoga studios burnSmog or other forms of air pollutionFortunately, you can take steps to lessen your chances of a painful exercise headache.Stay hydratedDehydration can trigger exercise headaches, so make sure to drink plenty of fluids before and during your workout. Here are some guidelines:About 2 to 3 hours before you exercise, drink 17 to 20 ounces of water.About 20 to 30 minutes before you exercise, drink 8 ounces of water.After every 10 to 20 minutes of exercise, drink 7 to 10 ounces of water.Within 30 minutes of finishing your exercise, drink 8 ounces of water. Consider sports drinks if your exercise will be very intense and longer than an hour. These drinks contain potassium, calories, and nutrients that can support longer workouts.Keep electrolytes balancedYou can get a headache after exercise if your electrolytes become unbalanced. Electrolytes are minerals, such as potassium, calcium, and sodium, that play important roles in your health, including helping your muscles work correctly. You get most electrolytes from your diet, and they leave your body when you sweat.Staying hydrated with water can help you maintain a proper electrolyte balance. You likely won't have to worry about losing too many electrolytes during workouts of less than an hour. However, if you plan to exercise longer, stay hydrated with a sports drink that contains electrolytes.If you sweat out a lot of salt, you should have either a sports drink or water along with a salty snack before a workout. To find out if you sweat out salt while working out, check your skin and clothes for a salty residue while you exercise or after you're done. You also can maintain an electrolyte balance by eating a diet rich in nutrients, including:Vegetables and leafy greensNuts and seedsLegumesDairySome fish and other seafoodLean meatsOther steps to prevent an exercise headacheAvoid exercising in hot and humid conditions.Avoid exercising at high altitudes if you're not accustomed to doing so.Warm up before you do a really tough workout.Cool down after you exercise.Get adequate rest daily, including 8 hours of sleep.Eat a nutritious diet, avoiding processed foods and preservatives.Take note of the exercises you were doing when your headache started. If you get a headache each time you do those exercises, try something different to see whether or not it causes an exercise headache.A headache after exercise can be a pain, but it rarely means something's wrong with your health. Instead, it may simply mean you need to drink more water, exercise in cooler conditions, or another factor that can be changed. However, if you have not had an exercise headache or it comes on very suddenly, it's best to call your doctor right away to make sure it's nothing serious.Is it good to exercise when you have a headache?If you develop a headache when exercising, it may get worse if you continue to exercise. When I exercise, will my headache go away?It's possible. Regular exercise can help relieve tension and prevent headaches.Which exercise is best for a headache?Moderate exercise, such as swimming, cycling, and walking, can help with headaches. Aim for 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.What pressure points get rid of a headache?There are a few pressure points that may help ease your headache:The back of your hand, in the web between your thumb and index finger.On both sides where the back of your neck meets your skull. The spot will feel like a little pool or depression.On your face, right between your eyebrows and above your nose.On your face, right above the inner corner of each eye. You will feel a small depression near the inner edge of your eyebrows. Is it good to rest when you have a headache?Yes. Resting in a cool, dark room can help ease your headache. Reviewed by our clinical team What is an exertion headache?If you've ever gotten a throbbing headache immediately after a heavy workout, then you've probably experienced an exertion headache, also known as a 'primary exercise headache'.Slightly different to normal headaches, they're usually a sign from your brain that you've overexerted or overworked yourself. These headaches can range from a subtle pain to a more severe throbbing and are usually worse the more you've exerted yourself. According to The Migraine Trust, around 2-4 out of every 10 people who experience migraines find that exercise contributes to migraine attacks. Interestingly, others find that regular aerobic exercise reduces the regularity of their migraines. Some people get exertion headaches without ever experiencing a migraine. In this guide, we'll look at the causes of exertion headaches and why exercise can trigger them. We'll also look at how they differ from other types of headaches and migraines, and what you can do to avoid or mitigate their impact on you. Which activities cause exercise headaches?Exertion headaches can be a response to any kind of overexertion and can sneak up during various physical activities that get your blood pumping.In general, most doctors believe that they are caused by the rapid expansion of the blood vessels in the brain as the heart begins to beat faster and faster. Some common activities that might trigger exertion headaches include: Running: fast-paced jogging or sprinting, especially in hot weatherWeightlifting: heavy lifting or high-intensity strength trainingSwimming: intense swimming sessions, especially in cold waterRowing: the strenuous effort involved in rowing can sometimes lead to exertion headachesTennis or other racket sports: the rapid movements and the intensity of racket sports can be a factorCycling: long-distance cycling or uphill bikingHiking or climbing: particularly at higher altitudes It's worth noting that exertion headaches can occur during any type of exercise or overexertion, however, they're more likely to occur if you suddenly increase the intensity of your workout, start without warming up, or exercise in extreme temperatures. Understanding your body's limits and gradually increasing the intensity of exercise can help stop exertion headaches and improve your exercise regime. For tips on how much exercise you need to maintain your health, check out our exercise guide. Symptoms of exertion headachesYou can usually tell when you're experiencing an exertion headache as it will generally follow a heavy workout, or some kind of overexertion, such as rushing from place to place. Symptoms of overexertion headaches can be like other headaches and migraines, so be sure to tell your doctor not just what you're feeling, but also when you feel it. Throbbing pain: a strong pulsating sensation, usually on both sides of the headQuick onset: the pain typically starts during or shortly after intense physical activityShort duration: anywhere from five minutes to 48 hoursNeck stiffness: some people feel a stiffness in the neck along with a headacheNausea or vomiting: in more severe cases, you might feel sick or even throw upVision problems: rarely, you might experience blurred vision or seeing doubleSensitivity to light and sound: Just like with migraines, bright lights or loud noises can be bothersome It's important to note that everyone's experience with headaches is different. If you regularly experience headaches after exercise, or if you start getting headaches at other times of the day, it's a good idea to speak with your doctor. How long do exercise headaches last for?The length of time exertion headaches last can vary from person to person. In general, they can last anywhere from a few minutes to a couple of days (48 hours.)Exertion headaches don't usually last that long. However, if you find that your headaches are lasting longer than usual, or if they're becoming a regular occurrence, you should speak to a doctor. Are exertion headaches dangerous?Most of the time exertion headaches aren't dangerous. They're more of a nuisance and usually resolve on their own, or by changing the way you exercise or go about your daily life. These headaches are a type of primary headache. However, some headaches can be caused by an underlying health condition - such as an issue with the blood vessels in your brain. These are called secondary headaches, and can potentially pose a risk to your health.If you're experiencing regular headaches, they're getting more severe, or are happening at random, this could be a sign that you have another medical condition which needs to be treated first. So, while exertion headaches are generally not a cause for concern, if they continue to be a nuisance or begin to affect you in other ways, you should check in with your doctor to rule out a more serious problem. How are exertion headaches diagnosed?Diagnosing exertion headaches can be difficult, as they only occur after exercise or overexertion. Most of the diagnosis will be based on a straightforward chat with your doctor. The general process for diagnosing exertion headaches is: Medical history review: your doctor will ask about your health history, including any previous headaches and your exercise habitsSymptom discussion: they'll want to know about your headache symptoms – like where it hurts, how long the pain lasts, and what the pain feels likePhysical examination: this might include checking your blood pressure and heart rate, especially after exerciseNeurological exam: the doctor may perform checks to see how your nervous system is working. This could include testing your reflexes, muscle strength, and senses.Ruling out other causes: part of the diagnosis is making sure that other health issues aren't causing your headaches - this is especially important if you're having secondary exercise headachesImaging tests (in some cases): if your doctor thinks there might be more going on, they might order a scan, like an MRI or CT scan, to look at your brain A headache diary can be invaluable in tracking your headaches and helping you express your concerns to your GP. Keeping track of when and where your headaches happen can make it much easier to identify the cause. Getting a proper diagnosis is key to managing headaches effectively, as the right steps to take can differ depending on the type. How can you prevent exertion headaches?Preventing exertion headaches is mostly about understanding and listening to your body. Usually, these headaches aren't caused just by exercise, but by exercising too hard or without proper preparation.Here are a few steps that might help keep those exercise-induced headaches at bay: Warm up properly: before jumping into intense physical activity, start with a gentle warm-up - this can help your body get ready for more strenuous exerciseStay hydrated: keep yourself well-hydrated, before and during exercise (dehydration can be a big contributing factor to headaches)Manage intensity: gradually increase the intensity of your workouts rather than pushing too hard, or too fastCool down: after exercising, take time to cool down - this helps your body ease back to its resting stateMonitor your environment: if you're exercising outside, be mindful of the weather - extreme heat or cold can bring on headachesRegular exercise: keeping a consistent exercise routine can also help, as sporadic bursts of activity might increase the risk of headaches Remember, while these tips can help, they might not work for everyone. If you're still getting headaches after trying these strategies, your next step should be speaking with your doctor. Treatment for exertion headachesIf you're dealing with regular headaches, several treatment options can help ease the pain or prevent the headaches from happening. You can take these on top of lifestyle changes, such as the ones above, for the best results.Over-the-counter pain relief: medications like ibuprofen, paracetamol, or aspirin can be effective in treating exertion headachesPrescription medications: in more severe cases, your doctor might prescribe stronger pain relief medicines.Beta-blockers: these are sometimes prescribed to prevent exertion headaches or migraines, particularly if you have them frequentlyTriptans: If you have a history of migraines, triptans such as Sumatriptan or Rizatriptan can be effective. They are designed to treat migraine symptoms and might be prescribed if you're regularly experiencing severe headaches.Other migraine treatments: if your doctor suspects a deeper problem could be behind your headaches, they might prescribe another migraine medication such as Rimegepant/Vydura. For more information about migraine treatments available through Online Doctor, check out our migraine guide.ConclusionAlthough exertion headaches can be frustrating for those of us who enjoy hitting the gym or pushing our bodies further, these types of headaches are not usually dangerous, and can generally be prevented with a few small changes to the way you exercise.If you're looking for more information on headaches and migraines, as well as how they can be linked to exercise and physical activity, take a look at our article on the various types of migraine, or our guide to the different stages of migraines. References //patient.info/news-and-features/what-are-workout-headaches-and-how-can-you-prevent-them //www.nhs.uk/medicines/propranolol/ We are told time and time again that exercise is good for our physical and mental wellbeing—but working out can be hard when it's accompanied by a pounding headache and nausea.These so-called "exercise headaches" can occur during periods of heavy mental or physical exertion, but why do they happen and are they a health risk?"Exercise headaches are a rare form of headache which can affect anybody," Bhavini Shah, a general practitioner with LloydsPharmacy Online Doctor, told Newsweek."Exertion headaches can be a response to any kind of overexertion and can sneak up during various physical activities that get your blood pumping."While we do not know exactly what causes these headaches, Shah said that it was likely related to our body's increased demand for blood during physical activity. "Some research suggests that it might be related to blood vessels inside the skull becoming dilated during a strenuous activity," Shah said. Stock image of a woman holding a hand to her head after exercising. Headaches after exercise are not usually dangerous, but it is important to speak to a doctor in case your symptoms are indicative... Stock image of a woman holding a hand to her head after exercising. Headaches after exercise are not usually dangerous, but it is important to speak to a doctor in case your symptoms are indicative of something more serious. PeopleImages/Getty While exertion headaches can occur during any form of exercise, Shah said that they are most likely to occur during:Running—Fast-paced jogging or sprinting, especially in hot weather.Weightlifting—Heavy lifting or high-intensity strength training.Swimming—Intense swimming sessions, especially in cold water.Rowing—The strenuous effort involved in rowing can sometimes lead to exertion headaches.Tennis or other racket sports—The rapid movements and the intensity of racket sports can be a factor.Cycling—Long-distance cycling or uphill biking.Hiking or climbing—Particularly at higher altitudes."Exertion headaches can occur during any type of exercise or overexertion," Shah said. "However, they're more likely to occur if you suddenly increase the intensity of your workout, begin without warming up, or exercise in extreme temperatures."People over 40 and those with a history of migraines may also be at a higher risk of developing these symptoms. But are exertion headaches dangerous? "Most of the time exertion headaches aren't dangerous," Shah said. "They're more of a nuisance and usually resolve on their own, or by changing the way you exercise or go about your daily life. However, it is important to talk to your doctor about your symptoms."Some headaches can be caused by an underlying health condition—such as an issue with the blood vessels in your brain. These are called secondary headaches and can potentially pose a risk to your health."If you're experiencing regular headaches, they're getting more severe, or are happening at random, this could be a sign that you have another medical condition which needs to be treated. You should check in with your doctor to rule out a more serious condition."There are also things you can do to minimize your risk of developing exertion headaches."Preventing exertion headaches is mostly about understanding and listening to your body," Shah said. "Usually, these headaches aren't caused just by exercise, but by exercising too hard or without proper preparation."To avoid exertion headaches, Shah recommends:1. Warm up properly"Before jumping into intense physical activity, start with a gentle warmup— this can help your body get ready for more strenuous exercise."2. Stay hydrated"Keep yourself well-hydrated, before and during exercise. Dehydration can be a big contributing factor to headaches."3. Manage intensity"Gradually increase the intensity of your workouts, rather than pushing too hard, or too fast."4. Cool down"After exercising, take time to cool down—this helps your body ease back to its resting state."5. Monitor your environment"If you're exercising outside, be mindful of the weather—extreme heat or cold can bring on headaches."6. Exercise regularly"Keeping a consistent exercise routine can also help, as sporadic bursts of activity might increase the risk of headaches."If you do still experience exertion headaches, simple over-the-counter painkillers can be an effective solution. "If you have been diagnosed with migraines, your doctor might prescribe migraine relief medication," Shah said.Is there a health problem that's worrying you? Let us know via health@newsweek.com. We can ask experts for advice, and your story could be featured on Newsweek. If you're ever experienced a headache after working out, you may be wondering why it happened. A headache after exercise is commonly described as pulsating pain on both sides of the head. This type of headache generally lasts from a few minutes to up to 48 hours following physical activity. This article reviews some of the causes, treatments, and prevention methods for exercise-induced headaches. Verywell / Theresa Chiechi Exercise-induced headaches occur after strenuous physical activity such as running, weight lifting, cycling, or swimming. This type of headache can occur as increased circulation around the head and scalp causes blood vessels to vasodilate (enlarge) to increase blood flow. The two categories of exercise headaches are: Primary exercise headaches: These occur during or immediately following physical exertion. They usually resolve on their own and are generally not connected to a more significant physical issue. These headaches can often be managed or prevented with over-the-counter (OTC) medications. Secondary exercise headaches: These stem from an underlying health condition, such as heart disease, and are much less frequent. Older age and severity of the headache after strenuous activities may warrant a discussion with your healthcare provider to rule out a more severe condition. Exertional headaches are headaches that arise with physical activity. These usually develop soon after performing physical activity or activities that require "bearing down," such as: RunningWeight liftingCoughing or sneezingSexual intercourseStraining with bowel movements Physical exercise without adequate water intake to replace lost fluids can lead to dehydration. Dehydration by itself can cause headaches. However, it may also exacerbate other underlying medical conditions and primary headache disorders that are dependent on hydration and fluid balance. Your muscles use fuel in the form of sugar to supply energy for physical exertion. Intense physical activity may drop your blood sugar during a strenuous workout. People who are not diabetic may be able to prevent exercise headaches due to low blood sugar, or hypoglycemia, by eating carbohydrates before working out. Nearly 50% of the general population has suffered or suffers from a headache disorder. Headaches affect people of any age, race, income level, and gender. However, they tend to be more common in women. Strategies to prevent exercise-induced headaches include: Staying hydratedWarming up before exerciseEating a small meal before working out to prevent hypoglycemia Talk to your healthcare provider about medications that may help prevent headaches during exercise, including: Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), which, when taken about 45 minutes before exercise, may prevent primary exercise headache in some cases Beta-blockers, which have been reported to prevent exercise-induced headaches and may be an option for people who cannot take NSAIDs Primary exercise headaches are more common in hot weather and high altitudes, so consider these factors before working out. Although exercise can cause a headache for some people, many experts say that getting regular exercise can reduce the frequency and intensity of headaches and migraines. If you get a headache following exercise, you should see your healthcare provider for a physical to ensure you don't have an underlying medical condition. Diagnostic tests that can rule out underlying health conditions that may be causing your headache include magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or lumbar puncture (spinal tap). It's also important to talk to your provider about medications to help manage your headaches. Most exercise-induced headaches are harmless. They typically respond well to OTC medications used for other types of headaches, such as Tylenol (acetaminophen) and NSAIDs. Exercise-induced headaches occur after physical activity due to increased circulation in the head that increases blood flow. A primary exercise headache is characterized by pulsating pain on both sides of the head. Primary exercise headaches can be caused by many factors such as exertion, dehydration, and low blood sugar. Exercise-induced headaches can be frustrating, especially if you regularly exercise. Fortunately there are ways to prevent them, like staying hydrated, warming up before exercise, and eating a small meal before working out. There are also treatment options available. Talk to your healthcare provider about medications that may help manage or prevent headaches after exercise. Frequently Asked Questions Some of the positive effects that exercise has on the nervous system are:Better cognitive functionRegulation of circadian rhythmEnergy balanceIncreased metabolismImproved stress responseMaintenance of mobilityOverall physiological health Exercising too much can lead to exhaustion and other health problems. In some cases, working too hard can even do more harm than good. Symptoms of too much exercise include:Feeling tired and needing more restDepressionDeveloping mood swings or irritabilityInsomniaPainful muscle sorenessBecoming injured from overusing musclesLack of motivationGetting sickWeight lossAnxiousness Some headaches may require a trip to your healthcare provider or urgent care. The following factors influence when you should worry about a headache:Onset after age 50Following a head injuryThose requiring bed restHaving new onset of headache symptomsHaving "the worst headache of your life"Headaches that get worse or increase with coughingHeadaches that change your personality or cognition levelHeadaches accompanied by a pink eye or pain at the templesHeadaches in a cancer patient or someone with an immune deficiencyA sudden headache upon wakingIf you have a headache accompanied by any of the following symptoms, call your healthcare provider or 911: When you exert yourself, your body needs more blood and oxygen. Scientists believe an exertional headache occurs when an activity causes veins and arteries to expand to allow more blood flow. That expansion and increased blood pressure create pressure in the skull, which causes the pain.What are the symptoms of headache after a workout?Symptoms of an exercise-induced headache often include:Neck pain.Pain on one or both sides of the head.Pulsating or throbbing.Sometimes the headaches feel like migraines and involve:Effects on vision, such as blind spots.Nausea and vomiting.Sensitivity to light.How long do exertion headaches last?Most exercise headaches last five minutes to 48 hours and happen for a period of three to six months. Skip to content When you exert yourself, your body needs more blood and oxygen. Scientists believe an exertional headache occurs when an activity causes veins and arteries to expand to allow more blood flow. That expansion and increased blood pressure create pressure in the skull, which causes the pain.What are the symptoms of headache after a workout?Symptoms of an exercise-induced headache often include:Neck pain.Pain on one or both sides of the head.Pulsating or throbbing.Sometimes the headaches feel like migraines and involve:Effects on vision, such as blind spots.Nausea and vomiting.Sensitivity to light.How long do exertion headaches last?Most exercise headaches last five minutes to 48 hours and happen for a period of three to six months.