



Modernising Patient Pathways Programme:

# National Headache Pathway - Overview

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## Background



- Headache is one of the commonest problems seen in both primary and secondary care:
  - General Practice: 4.44 consultations/100 registered patients
  - Neurology: 20-25% of referrals
- Global Burden of Disease study ranks headache disorders as the second leading cause of years lived with disability worldwide
- One-year prevalence of headache disorders is 50%:
  - Episodic Tension Type Headache: 41% female, 40% male
  - Episodic Migraine: female 18%, male 6%
  - Chronic Daily Headache: female 5%, male 3%
- Migraine alone is the leading cause of disability among people aged 15 to 49 years
  - In UK, an estimated 10 million people aged 16-65 experience migraine
  - 190,000 migraine attacks are experienced every day, 100,000 are absent from work or school every day, contributing to 43 million lost work or school days every year
  - 94% of primary care consultations for headache are due to migraine
    - Yet migraine is often not recognised and < 20% of patients with migraine attain a diagnosis
  - Costs of migraine to UK: £8.8 billion

## Pathway recommendations



This pathway has been developed to aid the assessment, diagnosis and management of common primary headache disorders and give guidance on when to consider secondary headache disorders.

Patients with headache disorders access care across the NHS and this pathway is intended to be relevant to those working across primary care including community pharmacy and general practice and those working across secondary care including emergency care, acute/general medicine and neurology.

It is split into 9 sections to allow easy access:

1. Overview: National referral pathway; red, amber and green flag; diagnosis of common primary headaches; life style advice and useful guidelines
2. Acute Treatment of Migraine: relevant to primary and secondary care
3. Preventative Treatment of Migraine: migraine prophylaxis accessed in primary care and specialist options available in secondary care
4. Open access CT from primary care, including information on incidental findings
5. Management of migraine in pregnancy and lactation: including pre-conception advise
6. Management of menstrual and peri-menopausal migraine
7. Management of Medication Overuse Headache
8. Cluster Headache
9. Indometacin Sensitive Headaches

## References and further resources



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