

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for Headache Management:

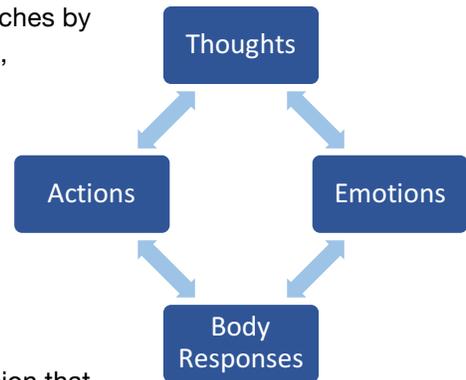
Information for Patients and Parents

Experiencing regular and high levels of pain often causes a buildup of stress.

- Concerns that an activity may trigger a headache can be scary: falling behind on school work due to frequent absences may cause anxiety and missing out on seeing friends often affects mood. Stress may then make the headaches worse! It's a cycle.
- A referral to psychotherapy does not mean your neurologist believes pain is “in your/your child's head”. We understand that the pain is very real and we want to do everything we can to help.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) – a short-term, goal-focused psychotherapy technique – is the best proven psychological treatment for pediatric headache.

- Children and adolescents improve their management of headaches by focusing on the connections between their thoughts, emotions, body responses, and actions.
- CBT teaches children and adolescents how to practice positive and realistic thinking patterns, as well as use relaxation, healthy habits, and enjoyed activities as coping skills.
- CBT strategies can help you/your child live a more meaningful life even without pain reducing. Research shows that often headaches do improve with time with this intervention.
- CBT also works well to treat symptoms of anxiety and depression that may occur with headache.



Parent involvement is key to the success of CBT for pediatric headache.

- Research shows that certain parenting approaches (for example, encouraging coping outside of sessions) can promote better child/adolescent outcomes.
- Let your child's therapist know you want to be part of the treatment plan and learn skills to support your child.

You can start working on some of these skills today.

- Look through the “**Apps and Website**” list to explore some options you can try at home.
- **Children/Adolescents:** Think about and practice the **relaxation** or **distraction** skills you already have. Relaxation is anything that helps your body feel calm (deep breathing, imagery, listening to music). Distraction is anything that helps takes your attention off pain (playing a game, art, talking to friends). Set a schedule to improve **consistency of sleep, hydration, and meals**.
- **Parents:** Help your child manage their headache by working to shift focus from headaches (avoiding asking questions about headaches) to encouraging coping and normal activity (school, socializing).