

## Medication Overuse Headaches

Medication overuse headaches (MOH) are also called *rebound headaches*. They are caused by taking pain medicine too often. Pain relievers help occasional headaches, but if they are taken more than a few times a week, they can cause a medicine overuse headache. When the pain medicine wears off after each dose, your child may get a MOH. This makes them feel like they need more medicine to help their headache, which starts the headaches all over again.

### What are the symptoms?

- Headaches that happen more than 15 days per month
- Headaches that shift between migraine-like and tension-like features during the day
- Headaches that get better with pain medicine, but then come back as the medicine wears off

### What causes it?

We don't know what causes them. Taking pain medicine too often may change the way the brain gets the "pain message" and makes the headaches worse instead of better. Any kind of headache medicine can make headaches worse, including acetaminophen, ibuprofen, naproxen, Excedrin, etc. Prescription medicines and drinks with caffeine can cause MOH too.

### How is it treated?

To stop Medication Overuse Headaches your child needs to take headache medicine less often or stop taking the medicine. The doctor will help you to decide whether your child should stop taking the headache medicine a little at a time or all at once. It may take some time for the headaches to get better. Your child's headaches may get worse before they get better.

### Tips to help avoid Medicine Overuse Headaches

- Your child should take their headache medicine exactly as prescribed by the doctor
- Your child should only take 2-3 doses of their rescue medicine every week. If they feel like they need more, call the doctor.

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**| Approved by Patient Education Committee | Valid through 2020**

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