

School Recommendations for Children and Teens with Chronic Headaches

Children with chronic headaches and migraine often have problems with school: missing a lot of school, having a hard time keeping up with schoolwork, stress, lower grades, and problems with friends. **Most children with chronic headache do better in the long run if they regularly go to school.** Making changes to your child's daily schedule or making accommodations can help your child be successful at school and stay on track. Below are ideas to help your child at school. We recommend that you work with the school and your child's medical team to make a plan just for your child.

Academic changes

If your child has missed a lot of school because of headache/migraine, making some of these changes might help your child catch up with work and support participation:

- Modify or reduce assignments.
- Use a quiet space and/or more time for tests.
- Have longer schoolwork deadlines and let them make-up work.
- Have an extra set of books at home
- Access a resource room or tutoring

Physical/environmental changes

- Keep snacks and water in the classroom
- Let your child wear sunglasses or a hat in the classroom if they are sensitive to light
- Let your child wear earplugs or headphones when having sensitivity to sound

Scheduled breaks

If your child is having too much pain to stay in the classroom, your child could:

- Take a short break in a quiet place, like the library or resource room, to use pain coping strategies like relaxation or distraction. A short walk can also be helpful.
- After 15–20 minutes, your child should return to the scheduled activities or class.
- Your child shouldn't usually need more than 3 breaks a day.
- School nurses don't need to call you during these breaks unless your child has new symptoms (such as a fever, greatly increased pain).
- Classroom teachers should let your child decide when these scheduled breaks are needed.

School transition program

- When students have missed over 2 weeks of school, we often recommend a slow return to school. For example, you might plan for your child to return to school for half days and work up toward a full school schedule.
- A plan to slowly increase attendance and participation can be created as a team with school staff, parents and your child. Doctors and therapists may have specific recommendations.

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Author: Neurology | Approved by Patient Education Committee | Valid through 2022

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Working with your child's school

- It is important to have routine communication with the school about how the plan is working.
- Find 1 school staff member who can be your contact person and decide how you will communicate (phone, email, meetings). Encourage all communications to go through this 1 contact person.
- Set up a time for your first communication after setting up the plan (within 1–2 weeks).