

Sometimes called a "medication-overuse headache," a rebound headache occurs as a reaction to withdrawal from prolonged or excessive use of pain-relief medicines (analgesics like ibuprofen or acetaminophen) or ergot derivatives.

## The Rebound Cycle

When patients take pain-relief medicine for headaches too often or in large amounts, their bodies get used to having the medicine in their systems.

At first, the medicine helps the headache pain, but when the medicine starts to wear off, the pain comes back. So, they take another dose.

Eventually, the medicine doesn't work as well, and they end up taking more and more medicine just to keep the pain away. This cycle is called "rebound headache."

### With rebound headaches, people report that:

- Their headache medicines don't work the way they used to.
- Their headache pain is harder to control.
- They need larger and more frequent doses of medicine.
- Their headaches get worse if a dose is missed.
- Their medicines to prevent headaches become less effective.

## What Causes Rebound Headache?

Rebound headaches result from frequent or excessive use of pain-relief medications or ergot derivatives.

This includes:

- Taking pain medicines for headache, including certain prescription medicines, more than three times per week on a regular basis
- Regularly taking as few as ten 500-mg aspirin or acetaminophen tablets/caplets per week
- Daily or near daily use of pain-relief medicines, including those containing caffeine

If you think you may be having rebound headaches, talk with your doctor. Keeping a log of headaches and medicines used can help your doctor evaluate the problem.

*Note: Many medicines can contribute to rebound headaches, so all headache medicines should be recorded, even those taken without a prescription.*

### Reference:

Mathew, NT. Transformed migraine, analgesic rebound, and other chronic daily headaches. *Neurologic Clinics*. 1997;15(1):167-186.

### Learn More About Migraine

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