



Job said to his friends: "Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, .....I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil." (Job: 20 & 26 NIV)

Perhaps along with the other miseries, he was suffering a massive headache!

Anyone who has ever suffered with headaches knows how miserable it can be. It can affect your ability to think, disrupt your sleep, make you depressed, and cause nausea or loss of appetite.

Not all headaches are created equal and can be caused by a variety of things:

This time of year, many allergy sufferers have headaches along with other symptoms of nasal congestion, watery eyes, coughing, sneezing, hoarse throat, etc. Besides the pollen and mold that brings on allergic symptoms, certain foods have also been known to cause headaches in some people. And headaches are often part of the symptoms experienced with flu and other infections. Headaches are often associated with neck or back problems, and as many people know: stress causes "tension" headaches.

Migraines are considered the "classic" headache: They occur more frequently in women, can run in families, frequently occur on only one side of the head, are often associated with warning symptoms, known as an "aura", and can be accompanied by other symptoms, such as: nausea, vomiting, changes in vision, sensitivity to light, and exhaustion, to name a few.

Headaches can also be a symptom of STROKE and require immediate attention. This type of headache will come on very suddenly, be very severe, and is usually associated with other signs of a stroke such as: changes in vision, speech, weakness on one side of the body, falling, or losing consciousness. Seek medical help right away if this happens to you or to someone you are with.

While almost anything that disrupts your normal body rhythm can bring on a headache, knowing what the cause is can be very helpful in treating it. One way to sort this out would be to keep a "Headache Diary" that includes what you eat/drink, what activities you engage in, how much sleep you get, if there are certain pollens or molds in the air (seasonal allergens), etc. Then make a note as to when the headache started, what part of your head hurts, how severe the pain is, and if there are other symptoms related to the headache (visual changes, light sensitivity, nausea, and so forth). In addition to certain foods – such as aged cheeses, processed meats, nuts, legumes, chocolate, red wine, for example – some people find things like aspartame (NutraSweet), MSG, gluten or lactose might trigger headaches. This would be important information for your health provider to know when devising a treatment plan. Decongestants or antihistamines are often helpful for sinus/allergy headaches. Check with your doctor for his/her recommendation for the best medicines to treat your pain and other symptoms.

Some non-medical things that you might try are:

Cold packs to the part of the head that hurts: Headaches produce swelling in the blood vessels surrounding the brain and is part of the reason for the pain in the first place.

Getting adequate sleep can help reduce headaches. Try going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.

Relaxation techniques have proven useful, such as biofeedback, deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation. If sitting for long periods, try to get up periodically to move around and purposefully relax your jaw, neck and shoulders.

Exercise regularly. Try to get 20-30 minutes of exercise at least 3 to 5 days each week.

Keep a regular routine. Eat meals and snacks about the same time each day. Don't skip meals, as sometimes headaches can be triggered by not eating (women are more prone to this problem). Choose foods wisely and eat a well balanced diet.

Try and identify the stressors in your life. You may not be able to get rid of them all, but by being aware of what causes stress, you can strategize ways to handle them so that they don't keep causing you pain. Remember the promise made to us in I Peter 5:7: *Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you (NIV)*. In Hebrews 10, Paul encourages us to not give up meeting together as this is a source of strength an encouragement that helps us get through those "stressors" of life. We also know that one of the greatest sources of strength (and therefore decreased stress) for us as believers, is the incredible power of praying for one another.