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Headaches, The Eyes, and Vision

Headaches are a common symptom associated with the eyes and vision. They can be related to allergies, muscle strain, strained vision, glare, migraines, and eye disease.

Allergies

The eyes are surrounded by several sinus cavities, which may become congested from colds or allergies. The tissue that lines the eyes is the same as that lining the sinuses. Your doctor will be able to recognize the signs of allergies in your eyes. People with headaches caused by allergies often wake up with them. Nearly 50% of the general population has allergies.

Muscle Strain

The eyes are controlled by six muscles on the outside and additional muscles inside. The outside muscles control eye movements and coordination. Difficulty using the eyes together often causes headaches, particularly during near tasks such as computer work. The muscles inside the eyes are used for focusing. A computer user changes focus an estimated 10,000 times during a 6-hour day. Our eyes were not made for this. Problems focusing commonly result in headaches and blurred vision.

Strained Vision

Many individuals can see well enough to get by but may notice a slight blur, or image overlapping the clear image. Even small amounts of astigmatism can result in strained vision, making discrimination between the numbers 8, 3, and 5 difficult. Other times a person may simply be trying to read print that is too small or of poor contrast. Trying to decipher poor handwriting can result in headaches. The clearer the image, the more comfortable your vision will be.

Glare

Four types of glare make seeing comfortably difficult. Uncomfortable glare is caused by everyday bright light—outdoors even on cloudy days, indoors with overhead fluorescent lights. Disabling glare is caused by excessive light, as from a window on a bright day. Blinding glare comes from shiny surfaces such as computer screens, glass, metal, water, snow, or concrete. Distracting glare comes from reflections from eyeglass lenses without nonglare technology. Each of these can cause squinting, eye strain, and headaches.

Migraines

Severe headaches are often thought to be migraine headaches by the general public. True migraine headaches are actually caused by the dilation of blood vessels in the brain. Usually the blood vessels constrict first, causing the vision part of the brain to get less oxygen and resulting in a strange vision phenomena. After approximately 20 to 30 minutes, the brain calls for more oxygen, dilating the blood vessels and causing the headache. Migraine headaches run in families.

Eye Disease

Many eye diseases may cause headache and discomfort. One type of glaucoma, conjunctivitis, iritis, and other inflammations of the eye can result in headaches. They are often associated with symptoms such as blurred vision, haloes around lights, and extreme sensitivity to light.

Your eye doctor will use several examination techniques to rule out vision and the eyes as a cause of your headaches. Treatment may include lenses, eye drops, oral medications, nonglare technology, eye exercises, or changes in the environment.

