

Headaches in Children

Children are just as **susceptible** to headaches as adults. The different types they suffer from are **tension headaches**, headaches from **lack of fluids**, and even **infants** can suffer from migraine.

Depending on the age of the child, they may not be able to tell you the symptoms of the headache. In small children who are not able to explain the headache, parents should watch out for them crying and holding their heads, or being **excessively sleepy**. In older children reaching puberty may also be a cause of headaches. If a child's headache is **accompanied by** fever and neck stiffness it is extremely important to seek medical help as this may indicate **meningitis** or **encephalitis**. Fortunately, most children's headaches are not serious and may be effectively treated using OTC medication.

Pharmacy customer: Hello, do you speak English?

PTA: Hello. Yes, a little. What can I do for you?

Do you have tablets with acetylsalicylic acid?

Yes, which size pack would you like?

A small pack should do.

Is it for you or for another person?

It's for my son. Why do you ask?

You see acetylsalicylic acid is **not recommended** for children. Even though it is possible to give it to children older than six years of age, it is contra-indicated in most cases, unless it is recommended by a doctor. How old is your son?

He's ten.

Have you any idea what caused the headache?

I know that he has quite a few tests to write in the next weeks so he's studying a lot. It might be caused by stress. He does sports, he plays basketball twice a week and football on the weekends. It could be that he is not getting enough to drink during the day, with all the extra work and sport.

Is it possible that he has a **head injury**?

No, that was the first thing that I asked him when he started complaining of the headache!

And he doesn't have a high temperature or any neck stiffness?

No, he suddenly got very pale and said that he felt a little nauseous but hasn't vomited, thank goodness. That's when he told me that he had the headache, which is why I immediately came to you.

I can recommend this ibuprofen liquid for children. We need to know the weight of the child for the dosage. Have you any idea what your son weighs?

Well, he weighs around 75 pounds, he's quite tall for his age. What's that in kilos?

Oh that's easy, just divide by 2.2. Let's see, that's just about 34 kilos. You can give him two and a half teaspoons now and, if necessary, again six hours after the first dosage. I could also recommend paracetamol, but if it were me, I'd take my son to see a doctor just to be on the safe side.

He tends to get slight headaches every now and again, so I'm not really worried that it is anything serious. I'll give him the first dosage when I get home and if there is no improvement, I'll take him to my GP immediately.

Okay. So here's the suspension. Is there anything else I can do for you?

No, thank you. You have been very kind and patient with me! Goodbye!

Bye! ■

*Catherine Croghan,
Lecturer in English and native speaker*

VOCABULARY

headaches in children	Kopfschmerzen bei Kindern
susceptible	anfällig
tension headache	Spannungskopfschmerzen
lack of fluids	Flüssigkeitsmangel
infants	Kleinkinder
excessively sleepy	extrem schläfrig
accompanied by	begleitet von
meningitis	Hirnhautentzündung
encephalitis	Gehirnentzündung
not recommended	nicht empfohlen
head injury	Kopfverletzung
pale	blass, fahl
nauseous	übel, unwohl
vomited	sich übergeben
slight	leicht
improvement	Verbesserung
GP (general practitioner)	Allgemeinarzt, Hausarzt