

Children with headache

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Family quarrels and a lack of free time can promote headaches in children. This is what Jennifer Gassmann and her coauthors concluded in their study on risk factors, which appears in the current issue of the *Deutsches Ärzteblatt International*.

This investigation was a component of a large-scale study entitled "[Children](#), Adolescents, and Headache" (Kinder, Jugendliche und Kopfschmerz—KiJuKo), in which data were collected in four annual "waves" from 2003 to 2006. Out of a multitude of variables tested in the larger study, the authors chose to look at the ones that concerned the children's family and leisure time. Up to 30% of all children around the world complain of headache symptoms arising at least once per week.

Boys who experienced more than one family quarrel per week had a 1.8 times higher risk of developing headaches. The amount of free time available to them seemed to be even more important: boys who only sometimes had time to themselves had a 2.1 times higher risk of developing headaches.

Parents' behavior when their child complains of headache also seemed to play a major role. Either positive or negative reinforcement from the parents teaches the child that he or she can gain certain advantages from headache symptoms. The parents' responses had a particularly strong effect on the frequency of symptoms in girls: reinforcing parental responses raised their risk of recurrent headaches by 25%.

The sexes also differed with respect to the frequency of headache.

Twice as many girls as boys had their symptoms at least once a week. The children's age, however, seemed to have no more than a minor effect on [headache](#) manifestations.

More information: *Dtsch Arztebl Int* 2009; 106[31-32]: 509-16,
www.aerzteblatt.de/v4/archiv/pdf.asp?id=65550

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