

# Adverse childhood experiences linked to frequent headache in adults

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Children who experience maltreatment such as emotional, physical and sexual abuse are more likely to experience frequent headaches, including chronic migraine, as adults, say scientists presenting data at the American Headache Society's 52nd Annual Scientific Meeting in Los Angeles this week.

Using data from the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study of 17,337 adult members of the Kaiser Health Plan in San Diego, Gretchen E. Tietjen, MD, of the University of Toledo College Of Medicine, and her team found that the number of ACEs showed a graded relationship to the likelihood of experiencing frequent headaches. Her study was supported by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

"We looked at eight ACEs -- emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, witnessing domestic violence, growing up with mental illness in the home, having household members who were incarcerated or were abusing drugs, and experiencing parental separation or divorce,," said Dr. Tietjen. "Each ACE increased the chance of frequent headache, and as the number of ACEs increased, so did the risk of frequent [headache](#). This 'dose-response' relationship' suggests that ACEs may contribute to the development and frequency of severe headaches later in life."

"Earlier studies have linked [childhood maltreatment](#) to frequent headaches and migraine," said David Dodick, M.D., president of the AHS. "The biological underpinnings of this relationship should be a target of future research and clinicians should be aware of and evaluate

for this important relationship in order to facilitate appropriate management strategies."

Provided by American Headache Society

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