

PEDIATRIC NEUROLOGY:

Headache

1. Screening questions and examination

- A. Symptomatic headaches are those with an underlying etiology requiring emergent or urgent attention.
- B. Benign headaches include chronic daily headaches (“CDH”), migraine and those related to chronic sinusitis.

Question	Probably symptomatic	Probably benign
Recent history	Trauma or sinusitis; sickle cell dis.	FH of headaches; recent stressor event
Frequency	Rapid escalation; short time	Intermittent over months/years
Symptoms	Unremitting, “worst HA of my life”	Stereotypic ± photophobia± phonophobia
Time of day	Early morning, overnight	Daytime onset; relieved by sleep
Emesis	Early morning nausea, emesis	Emesis may proceed sleep
Progression?	Loss of function	No
Altered LOC	Progressive lethargy	No
BP	May be elevated	Not elevated
Neuro deficit	± Progressive focal neuro deficit	± “aura” with transient stereotypic def.
Meningismus	May be present	No
Papilledema	Yes	No

Headache (continued)

2. Evaluation/ Disposition

- A. Symptomatic headaches with papilledema, meningismus, CN 6 palsies and acute onset of “worst headache of my life” require EMERGENT referral – to the Pediatric Emergency Department, Neurology and/or Neurosurgery
- B. Emergency MRI studies can be arranged by calling the on-call Neuroradiology fellow (and the sedation service as needed)
- C. For patients with migraine, CDH, etc, MRI studies can be arranged by the House Officer and should be performed prior to the Pediatric Neurology Clinic appointment.

Signs and symptoms	Course of Action
Early morning HA, vomiting, unremitting headache, papilledema and/or focal neurologic examination	Emergent MRI w/wo contrast and Neurol/neurosurg evaluation
Acute onset of HA, papilledema +/- meningismus	Emergent CT w/wo contrast to R/O SAH and subdural empyema
Progressive chronic daily headache, papilledema and bilat CN 6 palsies	MRI and LP with OP – R/O pseudotumor
Probable migraine (ie, stereotypic throbbing hemicranium, photophobia, phonophobia, emesis)	MRI to R/O mass, vascular malformation

Referral to Pediatric Neurology (Laura Ment, MD): Fax (203) 737 2236, Telephone (203) 785 5708.