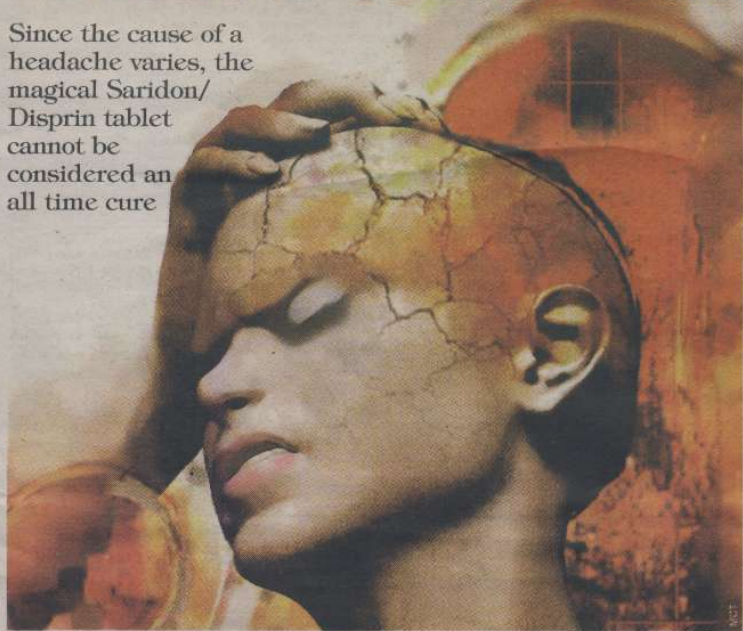


THE AGE  
DELHI

# Decode that headache

Since the cause of a headache varies, the magical Saridon/Disprin tablet cannot be considered an all time cure



JYOTI VERMA

THE ASIAN AGE

### SEE A DOCTOR IF...

- A sudden, severe headache crops up
- A headache is associated with fever/convulsions/pain in the eye or ear
- The ache is accompanied by confusion or loss of consciousness
- A headache follows a blow on the head
- You get persistent headaches /those interfering with normal life

The most common of all ailments, a headache can be caused by all manner of things ranging from humidity, air pollutants and tension to a change in eye power, spondylitis or a tumour. But, say doctors, since the cause of a headache varies, the magical Saridon/Disprin tablet cannot be considered an all time cure...

If a headache hits you around noon and ascends by the evening, it is most likely due to work tension/pressure. If it arrives after a meal is skipped it could have a gastro connect, says Dr. Vikram Singh, Consultant Neurosurgery, Moolchand Medcity, New Delhi. "But, a long lasting headache, persisting for more than two weeks, should be taken seriously," he says.

The International Headache Society divides headaches into three major categories: primary, secondary and cranial neuralgias, facial pain and other headaches. Primary headache disorders include migraine, tension-type and cluster headaches. Secondary headaches are those that are due to an underlying structural problem in the head or neck, diseases of the eye/ear/nose/throat, and have causes ranging from bleeding in the brain, a tumour or meningitis and encephalitis. "About 50-60 per cent of all the

headaches are primary, with migraine making 30 to 35 per cent and cluster 4 to 5 per cent," says Dr. Sumit Singh, DM, Associate Professor, Neurology and In-charge, Headache Clinic, AIIMS.

Most city dwellers are prone to tension-type headaches where the pain is like a band-like sensation around the head. "This is not serious and can be dealt with, by taking anti-anxiety measures such as meditation and yoga as well as some medicines," says Singh, adding, "A migraine is more severe and of two types — with and without the aura (flickering of light, vague blackness, etc) and occurs unilaterally affecting a part of the brain. The excruciating pain may be accompanied by nausea and vomiting. The migraine is episodic in nature lasting for four

to 72 hours at a stretch."

The secondary headache should be taken more seriously. Patients with new or different headaches — a "thunderclap" headache (which builds within minutes), focal neuralgic signs or symptoms, a change in existing headache patterns, or headaches associated with systemic symptoms (fever, weight loss, jaw claudication) — must consult a doctor immediately.

Headaches have clear-cut symptoms and fall into recognisable patterns. Patients must check: how often do they have headaches? Where is the pain? How long does the headache last? When did they first develop the ache? Does it happen when they drink coffee or miss coffee? So, before getting alarmed about a headache, Dr. Bipin Walia, Senior Consultant, Neurosurgery, Max Healthcare, advises people to scan themselves. "A headache is very case and person specific. If sitting in a certain position or looking into the computer for long periods gives you a headache, you would know the obvious reason. The basic remedy could be giving lifestyle changes — giving up caffeine, alcohol, etc., if these are the pain triggers," he says. If these don't help, track the timing, symptoms and strength of the ache. A consistent morning headache followed by nausea could be dangerous. So, see a specialist depending on the signals your body gives, he advises.