



# 2024 INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

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Medicine****TOPIC****Tension Headache or Migraine? Differences and  
Misdiagnoses**

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Tension-type headache is the most prevalent neurological disorder worldwide, affecting over 2 billion people.
- Tension-type headache is a primary headache disorder that is not caused by an underlying condition or disease.
- Tension-type headache can be treated with over-the-counter medications, so it is often dismissed, undermined, and undertreated.
- Tension-type headache is different from migraine. The pain is mild to moderate, bilateral, and often described as a pressure-like sensation.
- In contrast to migraine, tension-type headache often improves with activity and does not usually involve nausea or sensory hypersensitivities.
- Risk factors for tension-type headache include anxiety, depression, poor sleep, and neck/back pain.
- Chronic tension-type headache refers to headaches occurring more than 15 days per month and may be more refractory to treatment.
- Tension-type headache can coexist with migraine, and some tension-type headaches may have migrainous pathophysiology.
- Poor posture and eye strain can contribute to tension-type headache; addressing these factors can make a difference.

## TREATMENTS CITED

Acetaminophen (Tylenol)	Mindfulness-based stress
Acupuncture	reduction
Analgesics	Mirtazapine
Biofeedback	NSAIDs (ibuprofen,
Cognitive behavioral	naproxen, aspirin)
feedback (CBT)	Occupational therapy
Craniosacral therapy	Physical therapy
Epsom salt baths	Self-massage
Essential oils	Sleep
Exercise	Tizanidine
Heat/ice therapy	Tricyclic antidepressant
Lifestyle management	(amitriptyline)
Massage	Venlafaxine (Effexor)

## QUOTES

*"Sometimes people start out with very clear episodic migraine, but then as the frequency of attacks increases, the severity of the attacks can decrease. So you end up with this picture that looks like maybe tension-type headache a lot of the time with more severe attacks that look more like migraine."*

*"Anxiety, depression, poor sleep, back pain, neck pain, and trouble relaxing are common comorbidities of tension-type headache."*

*"If tension-type headache does not respond to initial treatments, it may be necessary to consider migraine as the underlying cause and adjust the treatment plan accordingly."*

*"Medication overuse, poor health, and frequent headache are risk factors for the chronification of tension-type headache."*

## PRACTICAL STEPS

- Seek expert care if you are experiencing severe or moderate disability from tension-type headache. A healthcare professional can help you understand your treatment options and provide the necessary support.
- Incorporate regular exercise. It can often help people with tension-type headache feel better, as long as it doesn't worsen muscle tension.
- Simple at-home treatments like heat or cold packs, self-massage, relaxation techniques, and aromatherapy can help reduce muscle tension and promote relaxation.
- Try nonpharmacological preventive strategies like cognitive behavioral therapy, biofeedback, massage, physical therapy, and acupuncture, all of which may be helpful in prevention.
- Visit the American Migraine Association website for comprehensive resources on different types of headaches, including tension-type headache.
- Remember, everyone deserves expert care and the opportunity to feel better.