



## **Distinguishing Sinus Headache from Migraine**

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Although a 2008 NHF web survey determined that 23% of respondents claim to suffer from sinus headache, research concludes that that “stuffy nose and dull head pain” may actually be a migraine or another form of vascular headache.

A large majority of sinus headache sufferers actually experience some form of a vascular headache. The enlargement of blood vessels typically causes vascular headaches, which include migraines, cluster headaches, and toxic headaches. Typically, the sufferer feels throbbing head pain that is intensified by physical exertion.

If a sinus infection causes a headache, the sufferer will feel pain and tenderness over the affected sinus and a deep dull ache that is exaggerated by head movements. Other typical symptoms of a sinus headache include:

- Nasal discharge
- Fever
- Ear sensations or ringing
- Facial swelling

However, vascular headaches, such as migraines, can cause similar symptoms in sufferers. According to headache expert Dr. Philip Bain, “In one large study of patients who met criteria for migraine, 84% had sinus pressure, 82% had sinus pain, 63% had nasal congestion, and 40% had runny nose symptoms often attributed to sinus infections.” (Read the rest of Dr. Bain’s case study from NHF Head Lines: “Ask the Expert: Sinus Headaches or Migraine”).

Talking to your physician to determine whether you are suffering from a sinus or vascular headache is crucial to get relief. Sometimes if a patient takes a decongestant medicine for a misdiagnosed sinus infection, head pain actually can increase.