

Table 35.1 Characteristics of headaches in pregnancy

Headache type	Onset	Location	Character	Duration	Worsened by	Other symptoms	Course with pregnancy	Diagnosis
Tension type	Gradual	Bilateral	Constant, pressing/tightening, mild/moderate	30 minutes to 7 days	–	Pericranial tenderness, minimal photophobia	No change	Symptomatology and history
Migraine	Progressive, may be preceded by aura	Unilateral, frontotemporal	Pulsating, moderate/severe	4–72 h	Exertion	Nausea, vomiting, photo/phonophobia	Majority improve	Requires at least 5 attacks to fulfill definition
Cluster	Sudden, up to 8 times per day	Unilateral, periorbital	Severe, constant	15–180 minutes	–	Ipsilateral tearing, sweating, congestion, edema, miosis, agitation	Rare	Symptomatology and history
Pre-eclampsia/eclampsia	Gradual	Bilateral	Pulsating	Persists intermittently until delivery	Exertion	Scotomata, right upper quadrant and epigastric pain	Occurs during pregnancy after 20 weeks gestation and up to 7 days post partum	Typically blood pressure >140/90 on 2 instances 6 hrs apart and proteinuria >300mg/24hrs
Hypertensive crisis	Gradual	Bilateral	Pulsating	Resolves within 1 hour of normalization of blood pressure	Exertion	–	Increased incidence in women with chronic hypertension	Blood pressure >160/120
Cerebral venous thrombosis	Progressive	Diffuse	Severe	Weeks, until dissolution of thrombus by anticoagulation	–	Neurologic deficits, seizures, loss of consciousness, increased intracranial pressure	Increased incidence	MR or CT angiography
Subarachnoid hemorrhage	Abrupt	Unilateral	Incapacitating, worst ever	Days	Exertion	Nausea/vomiting, altered consciousness	Unchanged	CT, MRI, LP
Idiopathic intracranial hypertension	Progressive	Diffuse	Constant	Resolves within 72 h of normalization of ICP	Coughing, Valsalva	Papilledema, visual field defects	Unchanged	LP to measure ICP (>200mm H2O)
Postdural puncture	Progressive within 5 days of dural puncture	Diffuse	Constant	1 week or 48 h after epidural blood patch	Upright position	Neck stiffness, tinnitus, hypacusia, photophobia, nausea	Associated with epidural and spinal analgesia	Symptomatology and history
Neoplasm	Progressive	Localized	Worse in morning	Indefinite, unless surgically resected	Cough or bending forward	Focal neurologic signs	Unchanged	CT, MRI
Caffeine withdrawal	Within 24 h of last caffeine intake	Bilateral	Pulsating	1 h if caffeine ingested, 7 days if not	–	–	Frequent in first trimester	Symptomatology and history
Meningitis	Progressive	Diffuse	Constant	Up to months after resolution of infection	–	Fever, stiff neck, nausea, photo/phonophobia	Unchanged	LP
Sinus headache	Gradual	Frontal, facial	Constant	7 days	–	Acute sinusitis	Unclear	CT, MRI