



## Medication Overuse Headache

Definition: Medication Overuse Headache (MOH) is a subtype of chronic daily headache. CDH is defined as headache 15 days or more a month for >3 months and can include chronic (transformed migraine; chronic tension type headache and new daily persistent headache). The prevalence of CDH in the US is 4-5% of the population. It represents 80% of the patients seen in headache practices. The most common subtype of CDH is chronic migraine; 80% of chronic migraine is associated with medication overuse and therefore, would be referred to as "MOH".

**TAKE-HOME POINT:** The most common cause of migraine-like or mixed migraine/tension-like headache >15 days/month is overuse of symptomatic migraine drugs and/or analgesics.

**Medication Overuse Headache has subclasses for the drug of overuse; they include:**

1. Ergotamine
2. Triptans
3. Analgesics
4. Opioids
5. Combination analgesics (analgesics with an opioid, butalbital and/or caffeine)
6. Combination of above

### The 6 Steps in Treating MOH/Rebound Headache

1. Educate the patient
2. Stop the offending medication
3. Initiate bridge therapy to treat withdrawal symptoms
4. Initiate transitional prophylaxis therapy, including nonpharmacologic interventions where appropriate
5. Establish acute treatment with limits on usage
6. Establish a time to follow up/at least monthly during acute withdrawal, then a minimum of every 1-3 months for the 1<sup>st</sup> year after withdrawal

### Stopping the offending medication-Three Treatment Options

1. Abrupt withdrawal with bridging medication; most appropriate for ergots; triptans; nonopioids; butalbital (if <60/month) in some cases

2. Slow taper (over 2 or more weeks) for opioids; most butalbital users; benzodiazepines; with slow taper, add preventive medications; initiate acute treatment for severe migraine with maximum of 2-3 days/week
3. Inpatient Detoxification Strategy; usually involves abrupt discontinuation of medication; Phenobarbital to prevent barbiturate-withdrawal syndrome/seizures; IV DHE and Reglan every 8 hours for 3 days is Raskin Protocol for in-patient detoxification

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