

## HEADACHE ALERT !!!

*“Specialists say headache sufferers tend to overuse painkillers, which can result in rebound headaches”*-source: National Headache Foundation

**WE AGREE !!** Every school year some students at the middle and high school level come to the nurse’s office with the same complaint: almost daily headaches and a request for over-the-counter pain killers.

An informative article appeared in the Portland Press Herald on June 15, 2004 entitled *“One More Headache: Painkillers Can Be A Trigger”*. Headache specialists say that it is not uncommon for teens and preteens to overuse non-prescription headache medicine. **Overuse is considered at least three doses a week for more than six weeks.** Overuse increases the risk of such side effects as stomach bleeding or kidney or liver damage, problems many people don’t realize can occur even with over-the-counter drugs. Overmedicating actually can worsen some kids’ headaches, a syndrome called **rebound headache** that eventually can spur almost daily headaches. Health care practitioners treat rebound headaches by tapering the medication that is being overused. More effective headache management includes treating common headache triggers:

- **Hunger** – make sure your son/daughter eats a healthy breakfast and lunch to insure adequate energy for the school day.
- **Fatigue** – most students need a minimum of 8 hours of sleep each night.
- **Dehydration** – at least 8 glasses of water (**not** soda, coffee, tea)
- **Stress** – encourage your son/daughter to use stress management tools including assignment planners, regular exercise, regular communication with family, and school personnel-nurse, guidance counselor, teachers and other trusted adults who can help your child strategize management of school expectations.

As school based health care providers, we will use this information to help your son/daughter understand possible headache triggers and to use non-medication treatment. Thank you for reinforcing healthy habits to prevent school absence and illness.