



CT head for patients with low-risk headache

Headache is a very common presentation in the field of emergency medicine. Choosing to do a CT scan should have clear reason. We advise against ordering CT scans in case of primary uncomplicated headache when your patient examination and history doesn't show any red flags. This approach is cost effective, decrease the length of stay, and avoid unnecessary radiation. Foregoing CT scans in uncomplicated headache doesn't alter the patient outcome nor will help to improve your patient.

When you do CT scan for uncomplicated headache don't expect to find the cause. Primary headache types (tension, migraine, and cluster) are the most common cause of headache and doesn't normally show finding in the CT. Red flags that might necessitate a CT scan or other imaging modalities include but are not limited to the following:

- Acute severe thunderclap headache
- New headache after the age of 50
- Headache that is associated with neurological finding
- Headache with fever
- Meningeal signs
- Headache associated with exertion
- Change in the character of previous uncomplicated headache.

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