



Above and below: Wheatgrass inhibits the growth of pathogens and helps the body to secrete toxins.



Headaches in children

There is a close link between headaches and disrupted sleep among children and adolescents with the two problems feeding into each other.

Apart from difficulty in falling asleep, other sleeping problems associated with headaches include not getting back to sleep after waking up in the middle of the night or early in the morning, and not feeling refreshed after sleep.

This is according to Dr Elliot Shevel, chairman of the South African branch of the International Headache Society (IHS) and medical director at The Headache Clinic.

Shevel is a Maxillo-facial and oral surgeon who specialises in the treatment and prevention of headaches. He is also the founder of the South African Headache Society.

He says the relationship between sleeplessness and headaches in children is a complex one: in some cases, the sleeping problems are a side effect of the headaches, and in others, they seem to be one of the triggers.

He recommends parents concerned about a child showing an apparent pattern of headaches and sleeplessness should try to address the problem without resorting to over-the-counter medicines.

In his three decades of medical experience, he believes prescribing a routine of healthy living is one of the most important steps you can take to help your child.

A predictable daily routine and a healthy diet with regular and well-balanced meals can often work wonders for a headache-prone child. Diet, particularly ingredients such as caffeine, sugar, processed meats, cheeses and chocolate can be a major contributing factor to both

headaches and sleeping problems.

The child should go to sleep and be woken in the morning at consistent times, with between eight and 10 hours of sleeping time. The child should do something relaxing (like reading) for an hour or so before going to bed as part of the nightly routine. Television, computer use and video games are stimulating and should be avoided in the hour before bedtime. Toys, especially electronic ones, should not be kept in the child's bedroom.

Parents should take the child to the doctor when headaches are frequent.

With papers published in over fifteen medical journals, Shevel recommends investigating the possible causes by asking your child the following questions and discussing them with the doctor:

- Do the headaches wake you up, or do you notice them when you awaken? When do they occur? Middle of the night or on final awakening?
- Where is the pain? One or both sides of head, forehead, eyes, face, jaws, top or back of head or neck?
- How do they feel? Pounding, throbbing? Dull steady pressure or squeezing like a vice sharp, jabbing pain?
- What other symptoms occur at the same time as the headaches? Nausea, visual symptoms, and so on.
- What makes them worse? Sleeping in late, sleeping on your back, sleeping without or with pillows, stress or relief from stress, nasal congestion, certain foods?
- What makes them better? Pressing over your scalp, medications, eating?

• Details : Visit www.headacheclinic.co.za or call 0861 678 911.