

Title: Migraine: A Guide For Patients

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Abstract: Migraine headaches are common in the primary care setting. Young adult patients experiencing new onset headaches are often puzzled by how to differentiate migraines from other types of headaches. On the other hand, patients who have suffered from migraines for many years are often frustrated by the suboptimal relief of their pain. This patient education tool gives the reader a general idea of what migraines are, what causes them, and what different treatment modalities are available. Websites where patients may investigate specific questions are provided.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.

Where To Find More Information:

National Headache Foundation
<http://www.headaches.org>

American Council for Headache Education
(ACHE)
<http://www.achenet.org>

Migraine Awareness Group: A National
Understanding For Migraineurs
(MAGNUM)
<http://www.migraines.org>



References:

Images:

<http://www.freeimages.co.uk/>

Written Information:

American Council for Headache Education
www.achenet.org

American Headache Society
<http://ahsnet.org>

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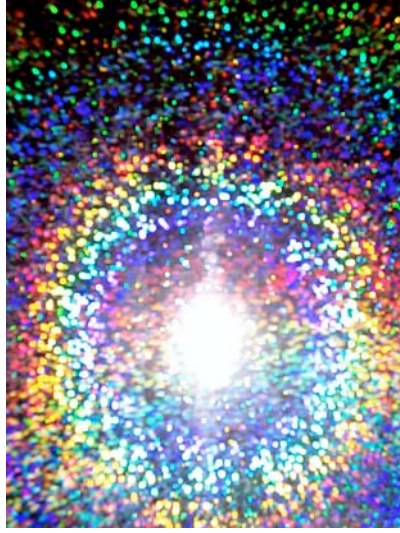
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What Is A Migraine?

Migraines are chronic headaches that usually begin during adolescence or in early adulthood. There are two different types of migraine – classic and common. Individuals with classic migraine usually have an aura before the attack with symptoms such as seeing flashing lights, or hearing sounds. Common migraines do not have auras, but have all the other symptoms of migraines.



What Are The Symptoms of Migraine?

- Some of the possible symptoms of migraine headaches include:
- Severe pain on one, or sometimes both, sides of the head
 - Nausea and vomiting
 - Heightened sensitivity to light and sound

How Long to Migraines Last?

The length of a migraine headache depends on the individual as well as a number of other factors, but in general a migraine may last anywhere from 4-72 hours.

What Causes A Migraine?

The exact cause of migraine headaches is still unknown, however there are several theories being studied including changes in brain blood flow and brain chemicals. People with migraines often have family members who also experience this type of headache.

The “triggers” for a migraine headache vary from person to person. Some frequently reported triggers include:

- Stress and anxiety
- Caffeine, alcohol or nicotine
- Weather changes
- Hormone changes during the menstrual cycle
- Certain foods like chocolate or dairy, or food additives like MSG
- Lack of sleep

To help determine the things that trigger your migraines, you may consider keeping a headache diary to record the events occurring around the start of your migraine.

How Are Migraines Treated?

There is no known cure for migraines, but there are multiple methods of treatment that you can discuss with your doctor to develop the right treatment plan for you. Some of the known methods include:

Lifestyle Modifications:

- Keeping a diary to determine the triggers of your migraines and avoiding those things
- Maintaining healthy lifestyle habits including diet, exercise and quitting smoking

Medication:

- Medications can be used to prevent migraines or relieve the pain during an attack. Your doctor can help determine what medications would be best for you
- Over-the-counter medications like acetaminophen or ibuprofen may help if you feel a migraine starting
- Triptans are a class of drug that needs to be prescribed by a physician. Triptans help relieve pain by narrowing blood vessels

Behavioral & Alternative Approaches:

- Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or yoga may help relieve stress that is associated with your migraines