

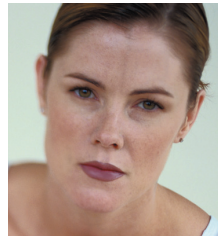
## What is a migraine?

A migraine is a very severe headache that tends to come back again and again. Many migraine sufferers have symptoms that interfere with daily activities. Migraine is a disease that requires evaluation and treatment by your doctor.

## How do I know if my headache is a migraine?

A migraine may include these symptoms:

- Moderate to severe headache pain lasting 4 to 72 hours or more
- Throbbing pain on one or both sides of the head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Sensitivity to sound, light or odors
- Pain that worsens with movement
- Feeling cold or sweating



Not all people have the same symptoms; however, each migraine sufferer generally has the same symptoms with each migraine headache.

## What causes a migraine?

Researchers believe that chemical or electrical imbalances in the brain cause migraines. Migraine triggers may include:

- Bright lights, loud noises or strong odors
- Emotional stress
- Certain foods (e.g., cheese, caffeine, etc.)
- Changes in the weather
- Menstrual cycle/oral contraceptives
- Alcohol and certain medications

## Are there warning signs preceding migraines?

Yes. You may experience warning signs before the start of a migraine, such as:

- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Food cravings
- Anxiety
- Excessive yawning
- Restlessness
- Feeling depressed

Some migraine sufferers experience “auras” that generally happen 15 to 30 minutes before the migraine starts. An aura may affect your vision. For example, you may see flashing lights, zigzags or lose part of your vision in one or both eyes. An aura may include prickly or burning sensations and muscle weakness on one side of your body.

## What should I do if I feel a migraine starting?

If you know that a migraine is about to occur, or you are in the early stage of a migraine attack, you can take medication to stop the attack or reduce its severity.

Keep in mind that overuse of medication may lead to “rebound” headaches. A rebound headache may occur as the medication begins to wear off. If you use medication to stop headaches at least twice a week, your medicine may actually be causing headaches. Your doctor can discuss medication options with you and how to avoid rebound headaches.

You may also experience some relief by holding an icepack to your forehead or temples and lying down in a quiet, dark room.

## ASK YOUR PHYSICIAN

### Should I ask about preventive medications?

You should discuss preventive medications with your doctor if any of the following characteristics describe your headache:

- You get headaches more than two times per month
- Your headaches produce symptoms lasting three days or more
- You use medications at the onset of a headache two times a week or more
- Your current medications to treat migraine attacks are ineffective in controlling headaches

When choosing your medication, your doctor considers several important factors, including type of headache, symptoms, other illnesses you have and other medications you take. One preventive drug does not work for all migraine sufferers.



Preventive medications may not eliminate all migraines but should reduce the number of headaches you experience. These medications are taken daily, regardless of whether or not you feel a headache starting. Many people see up to a 50 percent reduction in headaches with preventive medications.

### How can a treatment plan help me?

A treatment plan identifies realistic goals and expectations for treating your migraines. You and your physician work together to develop a plan that is right for you. It is your plan — you must be committed to giving it a try.

Your treatment plan should seek to:

- Identify and control triggers that may lead to a migraine
- Describe the medications you will use to prevent and treat migraines
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle

You can help your doctor develop a treatment plan by keeping a diary of your headaches, including the date, time, length, location and symptoms. Also, make a list of medications you take and other illnesses you have. These are important factors your doctor considers when choosing medications.

### What if I'm still having migraines?

Migraine is a complex disorder — one therapy does not work for all people. Even after seeing your doctor and taking medication, you may still have migraines that interrupt your daily activities.

If you continue to experience headaches, schedule another appointment with your doctor to talk about other treatment options. There are several alternative medications for your doctor to select, and you might benefit from changing drugs.

## PREVENTION TIPS

You can help prevent migraines by following the tips below. These tips may not stop all migraines, but they will reduce the frequency and severity.

### DIET TIPS

- Avoid alcoholic beverages, especially red wine
- Avoid nitrates/nitrites (found in preserved meats like bacon, hot dogs, deli meats, cold cuts) and MSG (monosodium glutamate)
- Limit caffeine or spread its use over the entire day

### LIFESTYLE AND BEHAVIOR TIPS

- Don't skip meals
- Keep a regular sleeping pattern
- Exercise regularly
- Pace your activities
- Relax daily and manage stress

### MEDICATION TIPS

- Talk to your doctor about medications to treat or prevent migraines. Your doctor may prescribe:
  - “Onset” medications to be taken at the start of a migraine when you first feel a headache or experience warning signs.
  - “Preventive” medications to be taken every day to decrease your chances of developing a migraine.
- Be patient — many preventive medications take four to eight weeks to start working.

Table 1 lists some of the medications that may be used to prevent migraines. Please show it to your doctor — it may help in choosing the best medication to include in your treatment.

**Table 1: Some Migraine Therapy Options**

Drug	Dose	Possible Side Effects/ Follow-up
Valproate (Depakote ER)	500 mg once a day in week one, then 1,000 mg daily thereafter	Stomach upset, drowsiness, tremors, weight gain, drug interactions. May require blood tests. May cause birth defects.
Naproxen	550 mg twice each day	Stomach upset, possible effects on kidneys.
Lisinopril (Prinivil), (Zestril)	10 mg once a day in week one, then 20 mg daily thereafter	Cough, rash, facial swelling. May require kidney monitoring. May cause birth defects.
Propranolol	80 mg twice each day up to a maximum of 240 mg daily	Drowsiness, dizziness. May slow heart rate. May not be appropriate for all patients.
Verapamil	240 mg once a day up to a maximum of 480 mg daily	Fatigue, constipation, dizziness. May slow heart rate.

## SUMMARY

If you suffer from migraines, you are not alone. Migraine is a disease and treatment is available. Visit your doctor, who can help you control and prevent migraine attacks. Discuss your current therapy, lifestyle, the possibility of rebound headaches, and options for prevention. Be informed and take an active role in controlling your headaches.

## OTHER RESOURCES

**American Council for Headache Education**  
19 Mantua Rd.  
Mt. Royal, NJ 08061  
856.423.0258  
[www.achenet.org](http://www.achenet.org)

**National Headache Foundation**  
428 W. Saint James Place, Floor 2  
Chicago, IL 60614-2750  
773.388.6399  
[www.headaches.org](http://www.headaches.org)

**Migraine Awareness Group**  
113 S. Saint Asaph St., Suite 300  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
703.739.9384  
[www.migraines.org](http://www.migraines.org)

**Information in this brochure is not a substitute for recommendations from your physician.**

# Migraines

## MEMBER INFORMATION



*Migraine is a disease*

*that requires treatment*

*by your doctor.*

*Take control of  
your migraines.*

