

MIGRAINE HEADACHE

Migraine headaches are characterized by recurrent attacks of headaches with moderate to severe pain. Migraines are believed to be caused by a change in blood flow in the brain and neck and/or a chemical imbalance. Young women are most commonly affected however, migraines can occur at any age. They tend to run in families. Risk increases with smoking, increased stress and anxiety, menstruation, and certain foods. Certain triggers have been identified as contributing to starting a migraine headache. Some known triggers are red wines, *MSG* (mono sodium glutamate), aged cheeses, meats with preservatives, skipping meals, inconsistent sleep patterns, smoking, and alcohol.

Symptoms *may* include:

- A moderate to severe throbbing pain usually on one side of the head
- Auras (usually occurs prior to migraine attack) - Seeing flashing lights or curved lines, temporary loss of right or left field of vision, arm or leg numbness or tingling, in some rare cases, weakness to one side of the body
- Increased sensitivity to light, noise, and odors
- Lasts anywhere from a few hours to a few days
- Nausea and vomiting

What you can do:

- Keep a log of when your headaches occur, medications taken, the type of pain, and any known triggers. Take the log with you when you visit your doctor.
- Adopt lifestyle changes to foster healthy behavior.
- Simple relief measures such as resting in a darkened, quiet room; ice to the forehead, and sleep may be beneficial.
- Discuss with your doctor which medication to take for migraine headache. Over-the-counter analgesics such as aspirin, acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), and naproxen (Aleve) may help.
- Learn and use relaxation techniques and biofeedback. This has been known to help some people.
- Avoid known triggers.

What your doctor can do:

- Diagnose migraines by performing a physical exam, asking questions about your symptoms, and reviewing your log.
- Prescribe prescription medication to help relieve headache pain in some cases.

Contact your doctor if headaches are not relieved with treatment and medication, are different than before, occur more frequently, or any other new symptoms develop. For women, notify your doctor if you become pregnant because certain medications for migraine treatment should not be taken while pregnant.