

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MIGRAINE

In the Clinic
Annals of Internal Medicine

What is a migraine?

- An intense, throbbing, painful headache that usually occurs on just one side of the head and lasts from 4 to 72 hours.
- Symptoms may include nausea or vomiting and sensitivity to light, sounds, and smells.
- Some people have symptoms called "aura," which include vision disturbances, numbness, and tingling.

How is migraine diagnosed?

- Your doctor will ask you about your symptoms and about any family history of headaches.
- You may be asked to keep a headache diary to help identify the type of headache.
- Your doctor will perform an examination to rule out any serious illness that could be causing your headaches.
- If you are pregnant, your doctor will consult with your obstetrician.

How is it treated?

Mild-to-moderate migraine without vomiting or nausea

- Acetaminophen and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as aspirin.
- Combination pain relievers, such as aspirin plus acetaminophen and caffeine.
- Some drugs are not safe during pregnancy and should be discussed with your doctor.

Severe migraine

- Prescription migraine medications, such as triptans, dihydroergotamine, or ergotamine.
- Narcotics, such as codeine, meperidine, or oxycodone, may be indicated if the usual treatment is ineffective.



- Hospitalization, if the migraine is severe and long-lasting.
- Some drugs are not safe during pregnancy and should be discussed with your doctor.

Other treatments

- Behavioral therapy, such as relaxation training or cognitive-behavioral therapy.
- Drugs called antiemetics to stop nausea and vomiting.

How can migraine be prevented?

- Limit common dietary triggers, such as caffeine and artificial sweeteners.
- Avoid other possible triggers, such as delayed or missed meals and lack of sleep.
- Daily preventive drug treatment may be appropriate if migraine attacks are frequent and severe.

For More Information

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/headacheandmigraine/htm/index.htm

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/headacheandmigraine/htm/index.htm

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/spanish/tutorials/headacheandmigrainespanish/htm/index.htm>

Information and resources on migraine from the National Institutes of Health's MedlinePlus, including a tutorial in English and Spanish.

www.headaches.org/content/my-headache

www.headaches.org/educational_modules/migraine_module/headache_diary.pdf

A guide to understanding headache and migraine and a printable migraine diary from the National Headache Foundation.

www.achenet.org/midas/

The MIDAS (Migraine Disability Assessment) questionnaire helps you measure the impact of headaches on your life and communicate this to your doctor.

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