

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MIGRAINE

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## What Are Migraines?

A migraine is a type of headache that differs from other headaches by causing severe pain and other symptoms. These headaches can last from a few hours to several days and can affect your day-to-day activities. If your parents have migraine, it is more likely that you will, too.

## What Are the Symptoms?

- Throbbing or pounding headache.
- Feeling sensitive to light or sound.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Some migraines include an aura. An aura can cause you to see spots, flashes of light, or bright spots before the headache starts. Sometimes auras can include a “pins and needles” feeling in the face or arms and trouble thinking and speaking.

## How Are They Diagnosed?

- Your health care professional will ask you questions about your family history and symptoms. The process may also include a physical examination to check for other causes of your headaches.
- This is usually all the information your health care professional needs to diagnose migraine.
- If your exam shows something unusual, you may need imaging tests, such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or computed tomography (CAT scan). However, these tests are rarely needed.

## How Are They Treated?

- Migraine can usually be controlled with lifestyle changes and medicines to reduce pain, such as acetaminophen, aspirin, and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.
- Some people take anti-nausea medicines when they have a migraine.
- If you have severe migraine, medicines called triptans might reduce the length and severity.
- If you have frequent migraine, some other medicines might decrease the frequency.
- Ask your health care professional what medicines are best for you and your migraine symptoms. It is important to understand how



and when to take these medicines. Using certain medicines too often can make migraine worse.

## How Can I Manage My Migraine?

Migraine can be caused by “triggers” like certain foods or stress. Some common triggers include:

- Certain foods. Drinks with caffeine like coffee, tea, and soda; some artificial sweeteners; and additives like MSG.
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Not exercising enough.
- Stress.

Some people choose to keep a migraine diary, which helps track what caused the migraine, how long it lasted, how bad it was, and what made it better.

Free printable headache diaries are available from the American Headache Society: <https://americanheadachesociety.org/patient-education>

## Questions for My Doctor

- How can I find out what triggers my migraine?
- How can I change my lifestyle to help prevent migraine?
- Are there foods I should avoid?
- What should I do when I feel a migraine coming on?
- What are the best medicines for my migraine? Are there side effects?
- Will I get migraine for the rest of my life?

## For More Information



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### American College of Physicians

[www.acponline.org/system/files/documents/patients\\_families/products/facts/migraine.pdf](http://www.acponline.org/system/files/documents/patients_families/products/facts/migraine.pdf)

### MedlinePlus

<https://medlineplus.gov/migraine.html>

### Choosing Wisely

<http://consumerhealthchoices.org/headache>  
<http://consumerhealthchoices.org/migraine>