



Migraine Headaches

MU Patient Education Series

Definition:

Migraine headaches are the result of changes in blood flow to the brain. They cause severe pain and throbbing on one or both sides of the head. Migraines are typically accompanied with nausea, vomiting, blurred vision and sensitivity to light and sound. Migraines can last for a few hours to a few days.

CAUSES:

Migraines can occur for a number of reasons. In some cases, the reason is unknown. It has been found that both environmental and genetic factors are linked to migraines. Some of these factors include:

- Imbalance in brain chemicals such as serotonin levels which helps to regulate pain in your nervous system
- Changes in the brainstem
- Various foods
- Changes in your sleep schedule
- Environmental/weather changes
- Stress
- Hormonal changes in females
- Certain medications
- Gender
- Age
- Family history
- Substance abuse
- Alcohol consumption
- Sensory stimuli such as bright lights, sun, unusual smells, loud sounds



SIGNS/SYMPTOMS:

A migraine feels like an extreme headache. But unlike a typical headache, migraines can come with a plethora of other symptoms such as:

- Diarrhea
- Neck stiffness
- Irritability
- Light sensitivity
- Noise sensitivity
- Pain on one or both sides of your head
- Throbbing, pulsing pain
- Blurred vision
- Vomiting
- Constipation

TREATMENT/CARE:

Medications have been developed both to prevent and relieve the pain of migraines. Work with your doctor to find the treatment plan that works best for you. Migraine treatment strategies include:

- Preventative medications
- Pain-relieving medications
- Anti-nausea medications
- Clear fluids
- Medications for your heart
- Anti-depressants
- Anti-seizure medications
- Acupuncture
- Rest
- Muscle relaxation
- Yoga
- Massage therapy
- Chiropractic treatments

PREVENTION:

There are several ways to prevent migraines and to reduce their severity. It is important to avoid the factors that trigger your migraines such as certain foods or an irregular sleep or meal schedule. Try



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exercising regularly to reduce tension and keep your weight and heart healthy. It is also very important to identify and manage the stresses in your life.

CALL YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IF:

Migraines should be caught early and treated quickly. If you feel a migraine coming on, take a step back, relax, apply an ice pack to your pain and take medication if it is available to you. If your migraine does not subside after 24 hours, be sure to contact your healthcare provider. You should also contact your healthcare provider if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms along with your migraine:

- Sinus pain
- Fever
- Difficulty walking, speaking or seeing
- Weakness in your muscles
- Repeated vomiting

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