

## **Migraine Headache**

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### **DESCRIPTION**

A migraine is an intense headache, usually on one side, accompanied by nausea, vomiting and sensitivity to light and sound. They may last from two to 72 hours. Migraines are more common in women than in men, and tend to run in families.

### **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

- Aura that precedes the headache. The most common is the inability to see clearly, followed by seeing bright spots and zigzag patterns. This stops once the headache appears.
- Dull pain in the temple that spreads to the entire side of the head. Pain becomes intense and throbbing.
- Nausea and vomiting.

### **CAUSES**

- Tension - emotional upset is often the trigger for migraines, but the migraine may not occur until after the stress, like on a weekend or on vacation
- Menstruation
- Sleep disturbance and fatigue
- Missing meals
- Alcohol
- Certain foods - aged cheeses, processed meats, chocolate, pickles, peanuts, brewer's yeast
- Caffeine withdrawal
- Food additives like MSG and artificial sweeteners
- Bright light or flashing lights
- Sensitivity to perfumes, fumes, cigarette smoke
- Frequent or daily use of analgesics may actually cause migraine headaches to occur.

### **GENERAL MEASURES**

- Apply a cold cloth or ice pack to your head
- Lie down in a quiet, dark room
- Relax and sleep if possible
- Minimize noise, light and odors
- Avoid factors that trigger attacks
- Reduce stress in your life if possible
- Do not skip meals
- Keep a regular sleep pattern - too much or too little sleep can trigger migraines
- Exercise regularly.

### **MEDICATION**

- Over-the-counter medicines: Tylenol (acetaminophen), Aspirin, Advil (ibuprofen), Aleve (naproxen), Excedrin, Anacin

- Prescription medicines: Migranal , Cafergot , DHE , Midrin , Fiorinal , Fioricet , Imitrex , Amerge , Maxalt or Zomig
- Antiemetics to control nausea and vomiting
- To prevent attacks, tricyclic antidepressants, beta blockers or calcium channel blockers can be used daily.

**CONSIDER NOTIFYING YOUR PHYSICIAN IF:**

- You experience the worst headache you have ever had
- Your headache is more severe and different than your usual migraine
- Your attack lasts longer than 24 hours despite treatment.