

Migraine headaches are not imaginary and they are not the result of an emotional problem or disorder. Migraine is the result of physical changes in your body. However, your emotions can have an effect on migraine. For example, stress acts on your nervous system and can make a migraine more likely to happen. Managing stress and increasing time for relaxation may help decrease the number of migraines.

Managing Stress

There are several ways to help manage stress: reduce the number of stressful things in your life, reduce the effect of stress on your body, and do more of what you enjoy.

Reduce Avoidable Stress

One approach to reduce the stress in your life is to make a list of the things that make you feel stressed. Divide the list into those things you can control and those you cannot control. Write down ways to manage or limit those things that are under your control.

Reduce The Effects Of Stress

When you are stressed, tense muscles in your shoulders and neck may result in or contribute to a headache. Two ways to help reduce the effects of stress on your body:

Relaxing-

- Relaxation techniques can help you stop the stress before it triggers a headache, or may lessen the discomfort of a headache once it starts.

Get moving-

- Physical activity helps you reduce tension and can give you an opportunity to "blow off some steam."

Do More Of What You Enjoy

Decide what you enjoy and do it regularly. Try to pick something that is not competitive. You want to focus on relaxing and enjoying yourself – not being better than someone else.

Learn More About Migraine

www.headachetest.com

GlaxoSmithKline Headache Impact Test™ – (HIT)*

www.achenet.org

or call 800-255-ACHE

American Council for Headache Education

www.headaches.org

or call 888-NHF-5552

National Headache Foundation

*Headache Impact Test™ is a trademark of QualityMetric Incorporated

Relaxation Techniques

Spend at least 15 minutes every day doing something to relax.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Here is a simple approach you can use to help relax your muscles. Follow the four steps listed below for each group of muscles, starting at your head and working your way down to your feet. Work on your face, neck and shoulders, arms, hands, chest, back, stomach, buttocks, legs, and feet.

1. Tighten your muscles.
2. Focus on how those muscles feel.
3. Then relax the muscles.
4. Think about how the muscles feel now. Do they feel lighter?

Deep Breathing

Sit or stand with your back straight. Inhale slowly and deeply. Let your stomach expand as the air flows into your body. Put your hands on your stomach to feel the movement of your breathing. When you have taken in as much air as you can, hold your breath for a few seconds. Now blow the air out through your lips as if you are blowing out a candle. Concentrate on the feeling of the air flowing out of your body.

Repeat this four or five times, and then sit quietly for a moment. Focus on how your stomach relaxes with each deep breath.

Biofeedback

In biofeedback, a special device helps you monitor bodily functions you do not normally control, such as your temperature, muscle tension, and blood pressure. You can use this feedback to learn to control these functions. Biofeedback is taught by specially trained healthcare professionals. With practice, many people are able to use biofeedback techniques without a special device.