

# Book 2 Special Issues in Migraine Disease



By The American Institute of Health Care Professionals, Inc.

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## Gender Notice

Unless necessary to make the distinction, "he," and "him" will be the words used throughout this book. This is in order to make the book easier to read without having to include "he/she" and "him/her." It is not meant in any way to discriminate against the female gender.

## Chapter 1: Complementary & Alternative Migraine Treatment Options (Non-Drug Treatments)

So far, you have learned about conventional treatments that you can receive from a family physician or neurologist.

However, when you suffer from migraines, you will do almost anything to prevent the next migraine, or to put a quick end to one that may be beginning.

It is not surprising then that many migraine sufferers have chosen to explore additional treatment options.

Although you may think that the terms complementary and alternative are synonymous, they are not.

Complementary treatments are treatments that are used in combination with conventional, Western medicine.

Alternative treatments are used to take the place of conventional treatments.

Together, you may hear these treatments referred to as CAM (complementary and alternative medicine), or integrative treatments.

The reasons why migraine sufferers consider other treatment options are many, but can include:

- Unwilling to use certain medications - because the potential side effects are too great. For example, you have to drink a lot of fluid when taking Topamax (an anticonvulsant used for migraines). If you know that you do not drink a lot during the day, you are at a high risk of developing kidney stones.
- Unable to use certain medications – because of your medical history. For example, some migraine medications are contraindicated in individuals with cardiovascular problems.
- They want to use natural methods – Perhaps they have tried several medications, but have experienced negative side effects.
- They are pregnant, trying to get pregnant, or are breastfeeding

So what kinds of other treatment options exist?

Massage Therapy – .

- Many people find that massage therapy can be a beneficial adjunct to migraine relief
- The therapeutic, deep-tissue massage can be applied to muscles of your head, neck, shoulders, and back.
- Or you may choose to get a relaxation massage, if you are unable to tolerate the therapeutic massage.
- The pressure and stretching applied by the massage therapist can improve pain in affected muscles, and improve overall posture.

- Massage also allows you to relax, which can be key to managing and reducing headache pain.
- There are different kinds of massage techniques, so you may want to experiment a bit to see if one works better for you. Examples include Swedish massage, and hot stone massages.
- It is advised that you seek out a registered massage therapist, who has extensive training and is certified to practice massage therapy. There are many people who have taken weekend courses, and then open up their own businesses doing massages on unknowing clients.

### Physical Therapy –

- Physical therapists are licensed health professionals with a university degree, and have spent numerous hours studying anatomy, physiology, pathology and clinical manifestations, and various assessment and intervention strategies.
- You'll recall that the cause of migraines appears to occur within the cells of the brain, so it is difficult to say whether physical therapy will work for you. However, it is worth a try as many people say it has helped their migraines.
- Physical therapy may work best for people who suffer from a combination of symptoms of tension-type headaches and migraines.
- You should see a physical therapist who specializes in musculoskeletal and/or craniofacial disorders, in order that your pain is best addressed.
- A physical therapist can assess the range of motion and mobility of the joints in your neck and shoulder girdle, and determine if poor postures are making your migraines worse.
- Once the physical therapist determines what can be improved, he may help enhance your neck mobility, strength of muscles, and your posture.
- A physical therapist may also deem you appropriate for use of a TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) machine, which is used for pain relief in many physical conditions.
- Depending on where you live, some physical therapists have taken further training in acupressure and acupuncture to aid their patients with pain relief.
- How much you respond to physical therapy relies, in part, on if muscles and joints are involved or contributing to your migraines.
- A physical therapist can teach you pain modalities such as relaxation, use of ice, and teach your family areas to massage to alleviate the pain.
- Tension in muscles is not the cause of migraines, but it can occur during a migraine. Therefore, a physical therapist can also teach you stretching exercises to do at home. This may reduce some of the pain.

### Chiropractic Treatments –

- Some studies have found that chiropractic treatments are just as effective as using migraine medications, but some of the studies have been flawed so more studies still need to be performed for more conclusive results.
- Chiropractic care involves spinal manipulations to take pressure off nerves that may be contributing to the pain.
- Chiropractors may also perform massages of the involved areas.
- Depending on where you live, some chiropractors may be qualified to provide acupuncture.
- Treatment also helps to decrease tension in neck muscles
- Chiropractic treatments of the neck have been under attack by other members of the medical community due to reports of increased risk of stroke.
- Chiropractors have argued this with the fact that many of the migraine medications also come with side effects, some of which are cardiovascular.

### Acupuncture –

- Has briefly been mentioned as one technique that some health care professionals use for pain relief of migraines.
- Is an ancient, Chinese method of relieving pain
- Involves the insertion of needles into your body's blocked "meridians" (pathways) to allow the natural flow of "Qi" (energy) to resume.
- Although not very well understood, acupuncture appears to stimulate nerve fibers in the muscles that relay messages to the spinal cord, and activate the spinal cord and parts of the brain, resulting in analgesia.
- Acupuncture may offer less side effects than drugs.

### Acupressure –

- Is another ancient method of self-healing
- Can be described as a cross between acupuncture and massage
- Like acupuncture, it involves use of the same trigger points and meridians. However, unlike acupuncture, no needles are used. Instead, finger pressures are used.

### Naturopathy/Naturopathic Medicine –

- The emphasis is on healing the body, using medical knowledge of how the body works in combination with natural forms of treatment.
- Naturopaths aim to prompt the body to heal and cure itself of the underlying cause of the disease. Naturopaths look at and treat the whole person (i.e. physical, mental, environmental, etc.).
- Naturopaths do this by educating their patients about needed diet and lifestyle changes, and may use herbal medicines, homeopathy, acupuncture, and other natural therapies.
- Naturopaths are highly-trained individuals with extensive training in all the same basic medical training as your family physician, but they also study holistic and natural forms of treatment for their patients.

### Homeopathy –

- Homeopathic practitioners use their knowledge and training to help their patients maintain good health, while preventing and treating any illnesses.
- Homeopathy has gotten a bad wrap in the news in recent years, accused that homeopathic remedies are so diluted that they are no more effective than water.
- However, people who have been to homeopathic physicians often swear by them.
- Homeopathy is not a new concept. The idea behind it is that "like treats like," hence the word "homeo." Homeopaths believe that an illness can be cured by a remedy which, if given to a healthy person, would reproduce those same symptoms that are being experienced by the person with the ailment.
- The remedies are highly diluted, and made of plant, animal, or mineral compounds.
- "Homeopathic" medications you find at your local grocery store may not contain the right ingredients. Instead, if you want to try homeopathy for your migraines, you should find an experienced homeopathic practitioner. Many get their business by word of mouth from patients who have experienced great results.

### Reiki –

- Is an ancient method of healing.
- Involves the Reiki practitioner placing his hands over energy centers of the body, to balance energy in the mind, body, and soul
- It is a relaxing treatment that claims to allow your body to heal itself, reduce stress, and reduce pain.

## Supplements –

- Always let your physician know if you are using supplements or herbal preparations, as there is always the possibility of interaction with medications you may also be taking. These interactions could either be dangerous or reduce the effectiveness of any medications you are taking. As well, if you are pregnant, thinking of becoming pregnant, or breastfeeding, there could be issues.
- Magnesium
- Magnesium, like calcium, is important for bone health. About 50% of the magnesium in your body is found in the bones of your body.
- Magnesium is also found inside your body's cells, and is involved in the biochemical functioning of your body.
- It plays many roles, one of which is to keep your muscles and nerves working properly.
- Magnesium is naturally found in spinach, almonds, brown rice, and others.
- Magnesium has been found to be low in people who suffer migraines.
- Although not fully understood, it is thought that magnesium may decrease the excitability of cells in the brain, decreasing the chances of a migraine occurring.
- If you do not think that you are getting enough magnesium through the foods you eat, ask your physician or a naturopath for advice on how much magnesium you should supplement with.
  
- Vitamin D
- Long known for its importance in bone health, low vitamin D levels appear to play a role in migraines as well. If you think that you are getting enough Vitamin D in the milk you drink, think again! Vitamin D is best produced in your body when it is exposed to sunlight. So unless you live close to the equator or live in the southern U.S.A., you are likely deficient in optimal levels of this important vitamin. You can be tested to determine your levels, and then adequate supplementation can be started.
  
- Riboflavin (Vitamin B2)
- This water-soluble vitamin needs to be consumed every day, because your body does not store it.
- It helps turn your food into energy, and helps produce red blood cells.
- It is found in foods such as fortified breads, dairy products, green leafy vegetables, and many other foods.
- Although riboflavin deficiency is not common in North America, some have speculated that it is the most common of all the vitamin deficiencies that there are.
- Although more studies are needed, results have shown that vitamin B2 may reduce the length of migraines as well as their frequency.
- Supplementing with high doses has been found to be beneficial for migraineurs.



- Omega 3's
- Omega 3's are essential fatty acids that you need to consume, because your body does not produce them on its own.
- It is important to note that your body also needs to consume Omega 6's, but it tends to have no problem getting enough of this in the diet through vegetable oils used in food preparation.
- Some examples of foods that contain omega 3's include coldwater fish, flax, and walnuts.
- Omega 3's have been studied for their beneficial effects on the cardiovascular system, arthritis, dementia, and depression.
- When you have too much Omega 6's in comparison to Omega 3's in your diet, you get inflammation in your body.
- Because Omega 3's help to decrease the inflammation in your body, they may also be helpful in the relief of migraines.
- Unfortunately, more research also needs to be performed in this area.
  
- Coenzyme Q-10
- Is also known as CoQ10 or ubiquinone.
- CoQ10 is something that your body produces and needs for production of cellular energy in your body.
- Unfortunately, CoQ10 decreases as you get older, and is found to be lower in people with migraines.
- Coenzyme Q10 can be taken in supplement form, but should be discussed with your physician first as it can interact negatively with some medications.

### Herbal Remedies –

Like supplements, all herbal remedies have potential side effects. Therefore, it is always advised that you speak to a qualified clinician who can guide you in the appropriate use, and educate you on side effects to watch for. Do not take herbal remedies, if you are a child, pregnant, trying to get pregnant, or are breastfeeding. Be sure to discuss with your physician first.

- Peppermint Oil
- Contains the ingredients menthol, menthone, and menthyl acetate.
- Peppermint is what is often found in mint toothpastes, some shampoos, and other products.
- Fortunately, peppermint oil is easy to get.
- It is known for its use in naturally treating conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome, nausea, and indigestion.
- Some people also find it useful for treatment of their migraines.
- Peppermint oil can be massaged onto your temples, forehead, and the back of your neck, and then you should relax with cool compresses in these areas.

- Feverfew
- Is a common herbal remedy for migraine sufferers.
- Lab tests have shown that feverfew may be beneficial in reducing inflammation.
- Studies have shown that ingesting feverfew every day may decrease the number and frequency of migraines.
- Butterbur
- This herb is used for many physical conditions such as insomnia, sore stomach, mouth ulcers, and of course, migraines.
- Be sure to use butterbur that is free of pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PAs) in order to decrease the risk of liver damage
- Butterbur is made up of ingredients that appear to reduce inflammation and muscle spasms.

#### Hormonal Preparations -

- Melatonin
- Is a natural-occurring hormone found in your body that helps to regulate your sleep.
- Melatonin has been shown to reduce the frequency and intensity of migraines, and to reduce the need for abortive/acute medications.

## Chapter 2: Taking Control Of Your Life -Things You Can Do

### Sleep

- There is evidence that people who have better-quality sleep have less frequent and less intense headaches, including migraines.
- To improve the quality of your sleep, sleep experts advise you to go to bed at a consistent hour, get up at the same time, limit caffeine intake from mid afternoon until bedtime, use the bedroom only for sleep and sex, and limit fluid and alcohol intake and nicotine use two hours before you plan to go to bed. (remember that too much caffeine can be a trigger for migraines, but it can also disrupt your sleep)
- There is no magic number for how much sleep you should get, but experts agree that eight hours seems to be sufficient for most.

## Yoga

- Because stress is one of the known triggers of migraines, this is where yoga comes in.
- Yoga can help to manage your stress, and promote relaxation, thus reducing the chances of getting a migraine.
- Yoga is also beneficial in reducing pain, when you feel a migraine coming on.
- Performing specific "asanas," which are the names given to particular body poses used in yoga, can be helpful in reducing the intensity of the migraine.
- If you do feel the beginning of a migraine, you may want to avoid positions where your head is below your heart, as this may increase the effects of the migraine. However, this is not the case with all yoga poses. It is just something to be aware of, and monitor the effects when choosing certain poses.
- The "Adho Mukha Svanasana (The Downward-Facing-Dog Pose) is an example of one pose that you may want to avoid during the start of a migraine
- Poses that many migraine sufferers use include the "Janu Sirsasana," the "Paschimottanasana," and the "Viparita Karani" (also known as the Legs-Up-The-Wall Pose).
- It is best to consult with a professional who can guide you in determining the most effective asanas for you.

## Exercise

- One of the characteristics of any migraine is that you cannot function, including exercise, during an attack.
- You also do not want to exercise when you start to feel a migraine coming on.
- There are mixed reviews as to whether exercise can help prevent the number of migraines you suffer.
- Regular exercise, however, may decrease the strength of your migraines.
- High-intensity workouts do seem to be a trigger for migraines, so moderate-intensity workouts may be a better choice for you.
- Exercise should not be avoided due to the fear of a migraine, because you are then putting yourself at risk of other diseases that can also become chronic and interfere with your life, such as diabetes, heart problems, and so on.
- Exercise is also beneficial for reducing stress and increasing relaxation. The feel-good chemicals, endorphins, are produced by your body, and can decrease pain.
- Exercise also raises serotonin levels in your brain. The brain chemical, serotonin, appears to play a large role in causing migraines when it is found in low amounts.

## Stretches

- Similar to how lack of sleep or particular foods can trigger a migraine, muscle tightness related to stress may also trigger a migraine.
- In this case, muscle stretches of the upper back, shoulders, neck, and head may help to prevent migraines, or provide relief during one.
- A licensed physical therapist can guide you in the appropriate stretches for you. Your massage therapist may also advise you if you ask him.

## Meditation

- Meditation has been practiced for many years, due to its benefits in dealing with stress.
- Meditation allows you to affect your conscious awareness, promoting relaxation.
- Meditation can be combined with yoga poses.
- There are many different kinds of meditation, so you'll want to find someone experienced in them to find the right fit for you.
- There are many self-taught meditation strategies that you may want to learn as well.
- A simple meditation session that you can do at home includes sitting in a quiet area of your home where your back is supported. You can begin with ten minutes of meditation, where you focus on your breathing in and out. Every time you breathe out, focus on letting the stress flow out of your body. If you find that you get distracted, focus on bringing your concentration back to your breathing. Completion of this exercise should bring some form of relaxation to your mind and body.

TIP: Set a timer so you know when ten minutes has passed.

## Biofeedback

- Is another relaxation technique that is helpful for migraineurs.
- It causes you to gain control and awareness of the physiological processes going on in your body – blood pressure, muscle tension, heart rate, and pain. You learn how to change these physiological processes in order to improve your health.
- When you begin doing biofeedback, you need a biofeedback clinician to help you. He will attach electronic sensors on your body, in order to pick up changes in your body's physiological processes. When changes occur in your body, you will be alerted by a sound or visual cue. You then need to learn how to change the signal by taking control of how your body responds.
- If you are interested in biofeedback, you will need to be motivated to take the time to learn how to do it, and to practice it to experience good results.
- Eventually, you can learn to do biofeedback on your own.

- Biofeedback has been shown to be very beneficial for older children as it is fun for them.
- If you do not live somewhere where you have access to a biofeedback clinician, then you may need to learn it on your own. There are many books and videos available.
- This method allows you to think about things that promote relaxation.

## Imagery

- Imagery shows how strong the connection is between your mind and your body.
- For example, if you think about salt and vinegar potato chips or taking a bite into a lemon, you begin to salivate.
- In this same way, when you think about relaxing things like being on a sandy beach and hearing the waves, you can promote relaxation of your body.
- In the same way, you can also use imagery to control your pain.

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- The benefit of doing progressive muscle relaxation, is it teaches you to identify what tense and relaxed muscles feel like so that you can reduce the chances of migraines being triggered by tense muscles.
- Start by tensing the muscles in your feet for 10-15 seconds. Then relax them. Pay attention to the difference between tense and relaxed muscles. Then move up your body, tensing and relaxing the muscles in your calves, thighs, buttocks, and so forth until you get up to your forehead muscles.

## Foods

- One of the best ways to gain control over your migraines is to use a food diary so that you can start to determine the foods that could be contributing to your migraines.
- Refer to Chapter 3 of Book 1 Understanding Migraine Disease for a list of common migraine-inducing foods.
- The most common migraine triggers are caffeine, chocolate, and aged cheeses.
- Not all cheeses are aged, such as cottage cheese, so you want to find out the ones that are. Aged cheeses contain a natural-occurring compound called tyramine, which is known to be a trigger of migraines. Cheddar and brie are examples of aged cheeses.
- Tyramine is also found in chocolate, smoked meat, sauerkraut, avocado, and many other foods, so you need to learn exactly what you are eating.
- Nitrites and nitrates are also big culprits that need to be avoided. A few foods that contain these include sausages, smoked meats and fish, cold cuts, and hot dogs.

## Stress Control

- As you recall, stress is a known migraine trigger.
- Imagery, yoga, meditation, exercise, etc. are all ways that have already been mentioned as ways of relaxing and thus reducing your stress levels.
- In addition to these methods of reducing your stress, you also need to learn other stress management skills such as prioritizing tasks, organizing your home, dealing with difficult people at work, managing your finances, and so on. If you can learn these skills, you can also decrease your stress, thus decreasing the chances of triggering a migraine.

## Chapter 3: Migraine & Headache in Particular Groups of People

### Females & Migraines

#### ● Menstrual

Greater than 50% of women experience more migraines at the time of menstruation, and often these menstrual-related migraines tend to be more severe. The fluctuation in the hormone, estrogen, appears to be the main factor contributing to migraines at this time of the month. This is when estrogen levels drop.

Thankfully, there are treatment options for women who experience this. Like other migraines, your physician may choose to treat you with the abortive (acute episode) or the preventive medications.

In the case of abortive medications, you'll recall that these are medications that you take as soon as you feel a migraine coming on. They may be over-the-counter medications, or prescription medications like the Triptans.

In the case of menstrual migraines, your physician may advise you to take the medication for two to three days before you expect menstruation to begin, and for the first few days of your period. Of course, this relies on you having regular cycles. If you have not been paying close attention to the exact length of your cycles, and when the headaches begin and end, it would be helpful for you to begin to track your menstrual cycles. The better you can predict when menstruation is going to begin, the more success you will have at determining when to take the abortive medications in order to prevent the start of a migraine.

- What about the birth-control pill or estrogen patches? Can you still use them if you get migraines?

Women who suffer migraines with aura, are generally advised against using birth control pills that contain estrogen, as there is an increased risk of stroke. The same advice is provided to women who smoke or have high blood pressure.

However, if you are less than 35 years old, don't smoke, don't have high blood pressure, and don't have migraines with auras, your physician may declare it safe for you to use the combination-birth-control pill or an estrogen patch.

Combination birth control pills (that contain estrogen and progesterone) are more reliable and effective against pregnancy than the progesterone-only birth control. However, some women find that the combination pills worsen their migraines, particularly during the placebo week of pills when the pills contain no estrogen and menstruation occurs. This is not true for all women though, so it is best to find a physician who is willing to do some trial and error in determining if there is something that works for you.

Although less effective at contraception, progesterone-only birth control may be a better option if you:

- Have migraines with aura
- Are breastfeeding
- Cannot take estrogen, because you smoke, are over 35 years old, have high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, and some other health conditions
- Have painful menstruation with lots of bleeding

Progesterone-only birth control comes in the form of the pill (called the "mini pill"), implants, and injections.

- Perimenopause and Menopause

It is estimated that greater than 70% of women experience some relief from migraines after reaching menopause. However, it is the time leading up to this that can sometimes be difficult.

The "perimenopausal" period begins before menopause. The average length of time that women go through the perimenopausal stage is about four years, but has varied from a few months to as long as

ten years for others. During this time, your ovaries begin to produce less estrogen, and your body's hormone production fluctuates.

Some of the perimenopausal symptoms that you may experience include:

- Hot flashes
- Irritability
- Mood swings
- Difficulty sleeping
- Vaginal dryness
- Periods that are no longer regular
- Increased cholesterol
- Thinning hair
- Worsening of migraines



Treatment, for perimenopausal migraine sufferers, tends to be similar to women not going through this "change of life." Therefore, the first choice is not usually to go with hormone replacement therapy (HRT), as this treatment carries risks of worsening migraines, while also increasing the risk of stroke, heart attack, and breast cancer. Instead, abortive and preventive medications tend to be the treatment of choice.

You are considered to have left perimenopause and entered "menopause" when you have not had a period in a year.

One thing you may be able to look forward in reaching menopause, is the possibility that your migraines will decrease a lot in frequency and intensity. Of course, this is not true for all women. However, it is estimated that greater than 70% of women experience some relief from migraines at this time in their lives. The remaining 30% may not notice a change in their migraines, or they may find they get worse.

### ● Pregnancy

Once again, every woman is different. You may still have migraines during the first trimester of your pregnancy, but then none in the second and third trimesters. This is mainly due to the increases in estrogen as pregnancy continues.

If you are someone who experiences migraines around the time of menstruation, you may notice having less or no migraines at all during pregnancy. This is most likely due to not having estrogen levels that drop off before menstruation begins. Women who have had migraines without auras before getting pregnant, tend to fall into this category.

After giving birth, migraines are likely to resume. If you consider that your estrogen levels decline after the birth, and you may experience more migraine triggers such as decreased sleep, not eating at regular times, and stress, it makes sense that migraines are likely to occur in the postpartum period.

If at any time, during your pregnancy or after you give birth, you experience a change or worsening in your migraines, it is important that you see your physician immediately.

For example, preeclampsia (confirmed by elevated blood pressure and protein in the urine) can occur in the second and third trimesters. One of the symptoms of this can be a very bad headache/migraine, but requires immediate medical intervention. Preeclampsia (postpartum) can also continue after the baby is born.

### Migraine Medication Use Before Becoming Pregnant and During Pregnancy

If at all possible, it helps to plan out your pregnancy so that you can avoid medications that are possibly harmful to the developing embryo and fetus. Unlike some medications that require you be off them for some time before conceiving, this does not seem to be the case with ones for migraine. However, consult with your physician to be sure. If, however, you are going to need migraine medications during your pregnancy, your physician will need to work with you to determine the safest possible types and dosages. It is important to remember, as already stated above, that some women experience improvement in migraines during pregnancy. You should also explore alternatives to medication use (massage therapy, biofeedback, etc). Herbal remedies and high-dose supplementation, however, are not advised. Always ask your physician if you are unsure about whether something is safe.

Of course, not all pregnancies are planned. The concern is if particular medications are used during critical organ development that occurs in weeks 3 to 10 of the pregnancy. If you are of childbearing age, you should discuss the safest medications and dosages to use, should you accidentally get pregnant while using migraine medications.

#### ● Breastfeeding

An advantage of breastfeeding is that menstruation does not resume immediately, so this can offer you some protection against menstrual-related migraines.

However, postpartum migraines can still occur when breastfeeding, because a number of triggers may set them off (ex. lack of sleep, etc.).

Concern with using medications for migraines is not a reason to stop breastfeeding your baby. While it is true that a percentage of the medication does pass into the breast milk, breastfeeding offers so many other health benefits for both the baby and mother. Instead, you need to discuss with your physician and the baby's physician (pediatrician) what medications are considered to be as safe as possible for use during breastfeeding.

Your physician may advise you to use acute, abortive medications rather than daily, preventative medications, but it will all depend on your circumstances and what works best for both you and your baby.

## Migraines and Cluster Headaches in Men

Because migraines are less common in men, they may feel that their pain gets overlooked by society and by some physicians. Some men may even feel that they have to be macho and "tough it out."

After all, isn't that what men are supposed to do?

Less men than women seek professional advice for their headaches. Unfortunately, men are also often misdiagnosed when they seek help. About 6% of the male population suffers migraines, but cluster headaches are even more common in men than they are in women (see chapter 2 of Book 1 Understanding Migraine Disease for signs and symptoms of migraines and cluster headaches).

In the case of cluster headaches, they are often misdiagnosed as sinus or dental problems.

The most important thing for men who are suffering pain related to headaches, is to find a physician who listens to you and helps you find a solution to dealing with the pain.

### ● Children and Adolescents With Migraines

Unfortunately, there is a genetic predisposition to migraines, so if you suffer migraines, your children also have a higher chance of developing them too. One kind of rare migraine with aura (familial hemiplegic migraine) has a chromosomal link.

Medical literature reveals that migraines may start as young as infancy! Preschoolers also can suffer migraines, and about 20% experience a migraine before they turn 5 years old!

Signs of migraine in children often include:

- Sweating
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea
- Paleness
- The desire to sleep.

Other signs of pain may be irritability and crying. Fortunately, migraines tend not to last as long in children, and sleep can help control the pain.

If this is the first time your child exhibits any of this, however, it is necessary to get immediate medical evaluation. This is because severe headache is one of the signs of meningitis, a life-threatening illness that involves infection of the linings of the brain or spinal cord. Brain tumor is rare, but needs to be ruled out by your physician.

More boys experience migraines at an earlier age, but by the time puberty hits, more girls have migraines. This is probably most related to the estrogen fluctuations that occur with menstruation.

Prescription medications, for children and teenagers who experience migraines, are limited. Therefore, abortive, over-the-counter medications tend to be the medication of choice. Examples include acetaminophen and ibuprofen, and sometimes NSAID's. Sometimes Triptans are also prescribed. ASA (Aspirin) is never safe for use with children or adolescents due to the risk of Reye's Syndrome, a potentially deadly disease that can occur if aspirin is consumed during a viral illness. Non-medication treatments should also be implemented. For example, ensure you provide your child with a quiet, dark room to sleep. You can also provide your child with cold compresses. For older children, they can learn self-help techniques such as biofeedback and imagery to help manage the pain. It is also imperative that parents and children are educated on possible migraine triggers. It can be helpful to use headache and food diaries in order to determine some of this.

Because skipped meals and lack of sleep can bring on migraines, it is also important to stick to a routine. In addition, to keep stress down in your child's life, you need to ensure you are not overloading your child with too many extracurricular activities. Diet may also need to be modified, as certain foods can be triggers. Once again, keeping a food diary can also be helpful. However, you need to remember that a child still has to be a child, so you do not want to control every aspect of what your child eats, or prevent him from going on sleepovers. Eventually, as your child gets old enough, he will learn whether to risk a migraine if choosing to ignore a known migraine trigger.

Sometimes, preventive medications are used. This is usually reserved for those children who are having one or more migraines every week.

#### ● Seniors

Migraines in people over the age of 60, decreases to 5% in women and less than 2% in men. The frequency also tends to decrease, likely due to the changes in hormones that accompany older age. If, however, you begin to experience migraines or new types of headaches later in life, this can be a cause for concern, and you need to see a physician immediately.

Unfortunately, as you age, the chances of new headaches being of the "primary" type (see Chapter 2 of Book 1 Understanding Migraine Disease for a review) decreases, and the chances of them being "secondary" type increases.

Secondary headaches can be due to a number of factors including, but not limited to:

- Other medications you are taking
- TIA's (mini-strokes), or CVA's (strokes)
- Anemia
- High blood pressure

In any case, always be sure to check with your doctor, who can do a thorough evaluation to rule out other possibilities.

## Chapter 4: Special Circumstances

### ● Weekend Migraines

Many people experience migraines on the weekends, after a busy week at work. This has nothing to do with the "hangover" headache that you may get, after drinking alcohol, a known migraine trigger.

Instead, weekend migraines tend to be set off by changes in your sleeping, eating, and drinking habits. So, if you go to bed late or sleep in, you may trigger a migraine. As well, if you don't get up at the normal time and drink your caffeinated coffee, this may also set off a migraine. Not eating for a prolonged period of time can also be another reason a migraine begins.

If you want to avoid weekend migraines, the best thing you can do is to stick to a regular routine of going to bed and getting up at the same time, including eating and drinking at the regular times of day like you do during the week. You will also want to watch the foods and drinks you consume, as extra chocolate and alcohol could trigger a migraine.

Lastly, it is important that you don't ignore your stress levels and possible muscle tension all week, as you are setting yourself up for a migraine as soon as you begin to unwind at the end of the week. To prevent this from happening, you need to implement stress-relieving and headache-reducing techniques during the week. These methods have already been discussed in an earlier chapter, and include doing things like biofeedback, imagery, meditation, and yoga.

### ● Migraines and Travel

Similar to weekend migraines, travel is another time when you may experience an attack. Often, you have spent the days leading up to the trip packing and running around doing last minute things in preparation for your trip, and trying to complete things at work. This results in lots of stress, lost sleep, and less time taking care of yourself.

Then once you leave on your trip, you are faced with other potential migraine triggers such as being rushed to catch flights, long hours with your children who may be cranky and tired, time zone changes, missed meals, and so on. In order to decrease the risk of a migraine on your trip, you need to plan ahead.

Here are some things you can do to lessen the chances of a migraine attack when you begin your trip:

- Start packing weeks or days in advance. Do not leave it all to the last day.
- Make a list of the last-minute things you will need to put in your suitcase so that you don't forget anything (ex. toothpaste, cosmetics, hairbrush, headache medication).
- Pack some healthy snacks in your suitcase, so that they are available as soon as you get to your hotel room, should you not be able to eat for a few hours.
- If you know that you have to be up at 3 a.m. to catch a plane, go to bed earlier that evening so you can get enough rest. This will likely involve slightly manipulating your sleep schedule a few days in advance so that you can actually fall asleep by 8 or 9 p.m. the night before you leave.
- Even better, book your flight at a time that does not disrupt your sleep schedule at all.
- When you arrive at your destination city, plan to take it easy the first day.
- Stay hydrated by drinking enough water throughout your trip.
- Avoid possible food triggers, especially early on in the trip when you will be experiencing lots of other migraine triggers including stress, decreased sleep, etc.
- If you are driving to your trip destination, be sure to share the driving or just be a passenger. So when it comes to travel, migraine prevention starts weeks before you ever leave on your trip. By being prepared, you can reduce many migraine triggers.
- Migraine, Depression, and Anxiety

You will recall that sometimes antidepressants are prescribed as a preventive medication for migraine sufferers. Just because you have been prescribed an antidepressant, does not mean that your physician has also diagnosed you with depression. However, there is definitely a link between migraine and depression.

In fact, if you have migraines, you are at greater risk of having depression and anxiety at some point in your life. As well, if you have depression, you are also at increased risk of developing migraines.

Reasons for this include may include:

- Feeling socially isolated and negative about your situation
- Migraines and depression involve the same neurotransmitters/brain chemicals. In particular, serotonin is decreased in people with migraines, as well as people with depression. This explains why antidepressants work for people who have depression or migraines.

## Chapter 5: Choosing Your Physician & Preparing to See Him

A specialist, who focuses on disorders of the brain and spinal cord (neurologist), is a good choice. Your family physician may also be able to help you, if he has expertise in the area of headaches and migraines. In any case, you need to find a physician that can help you so that you can begin to live your life again.

Because managing the pain of migraines can involve trial and error, you need to find a patient physician who:

- Listens to what you have to say
- Is willing to work with you
- Does not get offended by your questions
- Is knowledgeable in headache and migraine treatment.
- Acknowledges that you may want to use complementary and alternative treatments, and guides you appropriately
- Encourages you to take control of your migraines through lifestyle changes and modifications
- Is willing to refer you to another specialist, if needed, for further evaluations and treatment suggestions

### Preparing to See Your Physician

Because physicians are busy, and you (or your child) have been suffering with excruciating pain, you need to ensure that the visit to the doctor is a good use of everyone's time, and gives him the information he needs to make a correct diagnosis, and appropriate treatment plan.

In order to make the most of your visit(s), preparation is key. After all, headaches are subjective and your physician relies on you providing accurate information. Depending on the physician, he may want to see your headache diary. If not, he may just ask you for some of the information. If you go through the process of consciously and meticulously writing everything down in a headache diary, it will also help you as you should start to see patterns and trends that will also help you out. So, even if the doctor doesn't ask you all of these questions, it will help you out tremendously.

Here is information that your physician may ask you, so you should be prepared with the answers to these questions:

Questions for all men and women:

- How long have you had headaches?
- Are you seeking treatment for a new type or pattern of headache, or is it the same kind of headaches that you've always had?
- Why are you seeking treatment for your headaches now?
- Does anyone else in your family have headaches?
- How long do your headaches last?
- What sorts of treatment have you tried for your headaches?
- What has and hasn't worked (medication and non-medication treatments) for your headaches?
- What are the symptoms of your headaches? Specifically, you want to be able to describe the type of pain (ex. throbbing, dull ache, or stabbing), where the pain occurs (ex. one side of the head, both sides of the head, behind the eye, etc.), how long the pain lasts, whether sound or light bother you, whether you have nausea or vomiting, and any other symptoms you have.
- Does the area of pain fluctuate over the course of a headache or from one headache to the next?
- Can you still carry on with your daily activities despite having the headache?
- How many headaches do you get every week, month, or year on average?
- Have you been able to identify any triggers for your headaches?
- Do you experience prodromal warning signs that indicate a headache may be coming on? (ex. irritability, food cravings, tingling, etc.)
- What other, non-headache medications are you on?
- How often do you take headache medications?
- Do you have fibromyalgia?
- Do you have depression?

Additional questions specifically for women:

- If you are still menstruating, do you get headaches then? When exactly do you get headaches in your cycle? (ex. a few days before your period starts, a few days into your period, and/or at other times of the month such as ovulation)
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, have the headaches gotten worse or better?

How to Use a Headache Diary and a Food Diary

- Throughout this book, you have heard about using headache and food diaries. You will want to keep both kinds of diaries. These diaries are both useful for you and the physician, who is treating you.



## The Headache Diary

- The headache diary is useful, because although you think you can remember everything about your headaches/migraines, you cannot. By writing things down, you should be able to identify patterns, so that you can gain more control over your migraines.
- To help your physician with the diagnosis and appropriate treatment recommendations, you need to be as specific as possible.
- A headache diary will also help your doctor track the effectiveness of the medication he prescribes, as well as the dosages, so that any necessary modifications can be made.
- Some headache diaries only ask you to fill them out when a migraine occurs. However, it is better if you can fill out a headache diary every day for several weeks to several months. You may think this will be time consuming, but if figuring out how to reduce the intensity and frequency of your migraines is important, then it could prove to be the best use of your time ever!

## The Food Diary

- Because foods are often major migraine triggers, a food diary should also be used. This will help you begin to identify if certain foods are causing your migraines. Like the headache diary, you should also fill the food diary out every day. This is because it can take several hours after eating or drinking something for a migraine to develop, and by the time the migraine develops, you may not remember what you ate or drank hours ago.

## Talk to Your Physician About What To Do When You Are Not Getting Pain Relief

Many migraineurs have resorted to going to the local emergency room when they cannot find relief

from the pain of their migraines. Unfortunately, unless you tell the medical staff that it is a new, severe headache unlike anything that you have ever experienced, you are not likely to be prioritized. The physicians and nurses need to prioritize patients according to life and death.

Therefore, to avoid the possibility of having to go to an emergency room, there are some things you should do:

- Always have medications on your person, no matter where you are (work, vacation, home).
- Do not forget to refill your prescriptions or have over-the-counter medications in your home.
- Do your best to drink fluids, even if you are too nauseous to eat during the migraine.
- Use relaxation methods in addition to your medications

Should you need to go to the emergency room, here are some things you should do in advance:

- Prepare a list of all medications and dosages you take. You don't want to be preparing this list when you have the migraine, so be sure to write it down and keep it somewhere safe so that you can take it with you to the hospital.
- Discuss with your physician if there is somewhere he recommends you go (i.e. an emergency room used to treating people with migraines)

Here are reasons why you may have to go to the emergency room when you have a migraine:

- As already mentioned, the headache you are experiencing is new and unlike anything you've ever experienced. It may be the worst headache you've ever had.
- You have exhausted all efforts to get the pain under control.
- You are becoming dehydrated, because you have not been able to drink fluids all day.
- You have other medical conditions such as diabetes, requiring that you eat at regular times and administer insulin. However, if the nausea or vomiting is interfering with this, then medical care should be sought.

## Chapter 6: Summary & What to Do Next

There has been a lot of information presented in this book. It can be helpful to read the details over a few times, in order to digest all of the information.

Now that you have the information in your hands, it is necessary to take action!

You can begin by recording your symptoms every time you have a headache.

You also want to start determining what your migraine triggers are. Then you can begin to avoid those triggers, or to minimize the amount of them that you are exposed to.

You can do all of this by beginning to use the headache and food diaries today, and use them every day for quite some time until you begin to identify patterns with your headaches.

You will want to use the information you gather to present to your physician to help him treat your headaches appropriately. It is also very important that you find a physician who is patient, and who is willing to work with you to help you control your migraines.

As well, you will want to choose a practitioner (physical therapist, chiropractor, etc.) who can provide you with other non-medication methods of preventing or treating your migraines.

You also need to learn how to control your lifestyle. This may mean learning to modify your diet in order to avoid food triggers, or learning how to reduce stress by doing yoga or meditation. Other stress-reducing methods such as time-management at home and work should also be put to use.

In conclusion, there are many things that you can start doing now in order to start reclaiming your life. You will also have to be patient, and expect some trial and error to figure out what works best for you. It is very important that you do not give up, that you give your health professionals the information and time they need to help you, and that you give the treatments you decide upon a fair try. It may take some time, but it may prove to be well worth it if it means fewer migraines of lesser intensity!





# THANK YOU

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