

The
Pulse



Migraines

A migraine headache is a painful neurological condition, in which the most common symptom is a severe and often disabling headache. Migraines are typically characterized by an extreme throbbing or pulsing pain on one

or both sides of the head and are often accompanied by other symptoms including nausea, vomiting and a sensitivity to light/sound. Migraines are a chronic and often recurrent condition which can usually last between 4 to 72 hours if left untreated.

The pain of migraine occurs when excited brain cells trigger the trigeminal nerve to release chemicals that irritate and cause the swelling of blood vessels on the surface of the brain. Pain signals are sent by these swollen blood vessels to the brain stem (area of the brain that processes pain information).

There are two types of migraines – migraine with aura and migraine without aura. Roughly one-fifth of all migraine sufferers experience an aura (early warning sign of a migraine) prior to the onset of their migraine headache. These auras typically occur 15 minutes to one hour before the migraine headache begins and the most commonly experienced auras are:

- Sparkling flashes of light
- Dazzling zigzag lines in the vision field
- Slowly spreading blind spots in the vision field
- Tingling, pins-and-needles sensations in one arm or leg
- Language/speech problems and weakness (rare)

While it is not exactly known what causes migraines, it has been found that a number of things can trigger them. The most common migraine triggers are:

- Hormonal changes (women)
- Foods
- Stress and/or Depression
- Sensory stimulus
- Physical factors
- Environmental Changes
- Medications

Migraines are typically treated in one of two ways: a) pain medications; b) preventative medications. Pain medications are most commonly NSAIDS (aspirin, ibuprofen) and Triptans (Imitrex) which treat migraine pain once it has started. Preventative medications such as certain anti-depressants and anti-seizure drugs have also been shown

to reduce the occurrence of migraines. Research by the Mayo Clinic has also indicated that trigger avoidance, exercise, smoking cessation and reduction of estrogen in women (from birth control pills and/or hormone replacement therapy) can reduce the frequency, severity and length of migraines.

To aid migraine sufferers, there is ongoing research to develop safe & effective ways to reduce the frequency of migraine headaches in adults. Charlottesville Medical Research in conjunction with Dr. Pasi Nikpey are currently conducting a research trial for migraine sufferers who experience 15 migraines or more each month. If you desire information about the study, contact us at (434) 817-2442.

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What is
a Migraine?

**28
MILLION**

Americans suffer from
migraines (13% of the
population)

70% of all migraine sufferers are women
(3 times more likely than men)

**157
MILLION**

workdays are lost annually
due to migraines

(Source: National Headache Foundation)

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