

## Managing Migraines

Over 39 million Americans and one billion people worldwide suffer from migraines. The third most prevalent illness in the world, migraines affect 12% of the population, primarily individuals between the ages of 25 and 55.

Migraines can last anywhere from 4 to 72 hours and are more common in women. As most people can't function normally with a migraine, Americans lose 113 million work days at a cost to employers of \$13 billion annually.

Though the cause of migraines is unknown, it is thought to be related to family genes and changes in the brain. Other associated factors include anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, caffeine overuse and snoring.

Migraine symptoms include severe throbbing and recurring pain (usually on one side of the head), nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and extreme sensitivity to light, touch, and smell. These symptoms make migraines different from other headaches, which tend to be more chronic and steady.

Over-the-counter and prescription medications, massage therapy, patient education and simple lifestyle changes (see below) can all be helpful in treating migraines and headaches. Also, be sure to get plenty of rest.

If you feel that you may be suffering from migraines or if you often have a headache two or more days per week, visit your family doctor. And if the onset of your headache is sudden and severe, seek immediate medical care.



## Reducing Your Migraine Severity

If you suffer from migraines or headaches, try these preventive tips.

- **Avoid your Triggers.** Try staying away from anything you have noticed to cause or worsen your headaches.
- **Eat Healthy.** Eat food that is nutritious and avoid skipping meals during the day. Be sure to drink water.
- **Avoid Medication Overuse.** Overusing over-the-counter headache medication can worsen your headaches.
- **Stay on a Sleep Schedule.** Go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day and get seven to eight hours.
- **Exercise Regularly.** Make exercise a part of your daily routine, even if it is just taking a daily walk.
- **Reduce Stress.** Stress is a common migraine and headache trigger. Avoid your causes of stress if possible.



SOURCES: Migraine Research Foundation, World Health Organization, Mayo Clinic