

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MIGRAINE

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## What Is Migraine?

Migraine is a type of headache that differs from other headaches by causing severe pain and having specific symptoms that other types of headaches do not have. Migraine can last from a few hours to several days and often interferes with everyday activities.

## What Are the Symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Throbbing or pounding headache
- Feeling sensitive to light or sound
- Nausea and vomiting

Some migraine attacks include an aura. An aura can cause you to have a blind spot or see flashes of light or other visual events. Sometimes the aura involves a “pins and needles” feeling in the face or arms or trouble thinking and speaking. When an aura occurs, it starts and stops before the headache begins.

## How Is Migraine Diagnosed?

Your health care professional will ask you questions about your symptoms and family history and may perform a physical examination to check for other causes of your headaches. This usually provides all of the information needed to diagnose migraine.

If your examination shows something unusual, you may need imaging tests, such as a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or computed tomography (CT) scan. However, these tests are rarely needed.

## How Is Migraine Treated?

Migraine can usually be controlled with lifestyle changes and medicines, such as acetaminophen, aspirin, and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Some people take anti-nausea medicines when they have a migraine attack.

If you have severe migraine attacks, medicines called triptans might reduce the length and severity. If you have frequent attacks, other medicines might decrease the frequency.

Ask your health care professional what medicines are best for you and your migraine symptoms. It is important to understand how and when to take migraine medicines. Using medicines too often can make migraines worse.



## How Is Migraine Managed?

Migraine attacks can be caused by “triggers.”

Some common triggers include:

- Drinks with caffeine (coffee, tea, and soft drinks), some artificial sweeteners, and some other food additives
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Not exercising enough
- Stress

Some people keep a migraine diary that describes when their attacks occur, how long they last, how bad they are, and what makes them better. This information helps identify what causes their attacks and which treatments work best for them. Free headache diaries are available from the American Headache Society (<https://americanheadachesociety.org/patient-education>).

## Questions for My Doctor

- Do I have migraine or some other type of headache?
- How can I change my lifestyle to help prevent migraine?
- Are there foods I should avoid?
- What should I do when I feel a migraine attack coming on?
- What are the best medicines for migraine? Are there side effects?
- How can I find out if I have migraine triggers?

## For More Information



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### MedlinePlus

<https://medlineplus.gov/migraine.html>

### American Migraine Foundation

<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/patient-guides>

### National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

[www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/migraine](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/migraine)