

# MIGRAINE



what **you**  
can do



## What are migraine headaches?

Migraine is a common and painful headache that occurs in up to 20% of people. There are a number of things which can cause migraine and these differ from person to person. Some of them you can check out yourself.

Treatment will differ according to the person and your doctor can explain what treatment is available to you. There are also some things you can do to help yourself.

## What can I do about my migraine?

There are some things you can do to help prevent or reduce the pain of migraine. To do this you should be aware of:

- **trigger factors:** are your migraines triggered off by certain things, such as a reaction to particular foods, alcohol, exposure to stress, glare, changes in the weather, menstruation or physical activities? If you can identify the trigger factors you can then plan how to deal with them.
- **early detection:** learn to recognise the warning signs of a migraine headache, such as an aura (being aware of a strange feeling or smell), a craving for sweets, food or drink, problems with your vision, or a feeling of nausea.
- **early treatment:** as soon as you are aware of the signs of an attack immediately try to relieve it by lying down in a dark room, relaxing, using cold or hot compresses, or any other thing that you have discovered helps to reduce the pain or extent of the headache. Your doctor can recommend what medicines you can take at the first sign of a migraine headache.

## What can my doctor do about migraine?

Your doctor has guidelines for the most up to date management of migraine, based on scientific evidence of the most effective and safe treatments. The aim is for you to treat your migraine at the first sign to prevent it from becoming worse. You and your doctor need to work together to achieve this.

It is important for you to seek your doctor's advice about the most appropriate medicine and what dose is best for you. You may also need a medicine to prevent nausea which your doctor can prescribe for you.

In the past pethidine injections were sometimes given to relieve pain but now research has shown that this drug should not be used in the treatment of migraine. The reason is that there is a risk of dependence because it is an addictive drug, it can also make any nausea worse and it only works for a short time so additional medicine is necessary.

You and your doctor together can find the medicine which works best for you.

Date, day & time migraine began	Length of migraine - in hours	How serious was it*	Possible trigger factors*	Warning signs*	Other problems with the migraine*	Medicines taken*	How well did the medicine help	Any side effects of the medicine*	What else relieved the migraine*
		* e.g. could do normal activities or had to go to bed	*e.g. certain foods, drink, glare, stress, weather, menstruation or activities	*e.g. aura, strange sensation, sensitivity to smell, noise, light or craving	*e.g. nausea, vomiting, visual disturbances, etc.	* it is important to list all medicine taken - for possible interaction		*e.g. rash, vomiting, nausea, constipation	e.g. lying down in the dark or using hot or cold compresses, etc.

## My pain diary

Discuss with your doctor whether keeping a pain diary will help you both to understand the causes, prevention and treatment that is most helpful for you. By filling in the above diary on each occasion you get a migraine, you may see a pattern emerge that will assist you in avoiding or relieving the headaches.



**NSW  
THERAPEUTIC  
ASSESSMENT  
GROUP**

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**NSW HEALTH**  
Working as a Team