

# Migraine

Migraine is a common type of headache, usually intense and characterized by throbbing pain on one side of the head. It may last for anywhere between a few hours and 3 days, and reappears more or less frequently over the years.

## How is it caused?

Migraine is not caused by any disease, but rather by reversible changes in the blood vessels of the head. It is more frequent in women and in some families. Precipitating factors of migraine attacks include hormonal factors, stress, altered sleep-wake cycle, certain food items and beverages, menstruation, physical effort, orgasm, and others.

## What are the symptoms involved in migraine?

Migraine can cause nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light or sound, paleness, and visual, strength or sensitivity changes. When these occur right before or at the beginning of the headache, it is called migraine with aura.

## How is it diagnosed?

Only symptom explanation by the patient and physical examination by the doctor are needed. Doubtful cases, however, may require migraine-specific tests, which are normally performed in migraine.

## How is it treated?

Migraine is treated with analgesics, triptans or anti-inflammatory agents.

Sufferers should rest in a dark and silent room, and put something cold on their heads.

If you know what it is that triggers your headache, avoid it. Patients with very frequent attacks should take daily medication to decrease the frequency or intensity of migraine.

## Are there any special situations?

Children over the age of 5 may also have migraine, although theirs may differ from adult migraine. The condition usually improves during pregnancy. Oral contraceptives are disadvised in patients with migraine with aura and in those who suffer it after taking the contraceptive.

Always ask your doctor if you take any medication.

## Where can I get more information?

If in doubt, consult your family doctor.

