

## Migraine headache information sheet

A migraine is a very painful headache. It can feel like a pounding, throbbing pain above the eyes or ears, at your forehead, in the back of your neck, or on one or both sides of your head and can last from 4 to 72 hours. Migraines happen because the blood vessels in your head become inflamed and swell, squeeze the nearby nerves, and cause pain.

### Facts about Migraines

- They often run in families. If you have a parent or grandparent with migraines, you might get them too.
- Between 4 and 10% of children have migraines.
- Migraines are most common in girls, and often start between 11-15 years.
- There are many things that trigger a migraine headache. Everyone is different. Triggers are not the causes of migraine and don't explain how headaches work, but they may set off the headache and make them worse. It is very helpful to figure out what your triggers are so you can be prepared for them and avoid them.
- You might feel sick to your stomach or throw up during a migraine.
- Some people have a warning signal, called an aura, starting 15-30 minutes before a migraine.
  - You might be bothered by sound or light or smells.
  - Your skin might be sensitive and feel numbness or tingling.
  - You might have a change in vision; you could light flashes, waves, or colors or have blurry vision.

### How do I know I have a migraine?

- Your headache doctor, nurse practitioner or nurse will talk to you about your symptoms, family history and ask you to describe what happens to you when you have a headache.
- You might be asked to draw pictures, tell a story or keep a headache journal to help figure it out.
- You will have a neurologic examination, which includes checking your reflexes, your eyes, and your senses, and you will be asked to do some movements.
- You might have a MRI scan, to see clear pictures of your brain.

### How do you treat migraine headaches?

- There are several ways to treat migraines, depending on how often they happen.
- There are medicines that you take every day, to cut down on how often the headaches happen. If you have a lot of migraines, these medicines are really helpful.
- There are medicines that you take whenever you get a migraine, to treat the pain or stop the migraine from getting worse.
- There are other things that you can do to treat or prevent migraines, such as exercise, stretching, hydration, healthy diet, enough sleep, and relaxation and biofeedback techniques.
- Your headache doctor, nurse practitioner or clinic nurse will work with you and your family to figure out the right medicines to use, and what other things you can do to stay healthy and headache-free.

### What are the goals of headache treatment?

- Reduce the number, length and pain of your headaches
- Reduce the number of missed school days and missed activities.
- Return to normal every day activities, such as school, sports and play.