

Migraine Headache Management Plan

Lifestyle factors:

Regular meals:

- Eating breakfast every morning is recommended for people with a history of headache.
- Skipping meals can cause migraines.
- A mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack may help prevent migraines.
- Drink at least 6-8 glasses of water per day. Sometimes just drinking more water can decrease the number of headaches.
- Water intake may be increased according to your symptoms.
- Slightly increasing salt intake or having a sports drink with electrolytes can help.
- Drinks with caffeine (coffee, tea, soda), aspartame (in diet soda) and high sugar (regular soda) are all dehydrating.
- Every time you drink these fluids, you should drink an equal amount of water.

Food triggers:

- Not everyone has a food trigger and it is not as common for children and teens.
- You must find these triggers yourself. Keeping a food diary for several months can help.
- The most common food trigger for children is caffeinated soft drinks.
- If specific foods do trigger migraines, then you may eliminate it or decrease your intake.
- Know the list of possible trigger foods:
 - Aged cheese and other foods, such as smoked fish, that contain tyramine
 - Alcohol and red wine
 - Artificial sweeteners
 - Chocolate
 - Citrus fruits
 - Coffee, tea and drinks such as Coke, Red Bull, Mountain Dew, Monster, that have a lot of caffeine
 - Monosodium glutamate (MSG), often found in Chinese food
 - Nitrates in cured and processed meats (hot dogs, lunch meats, pepperoni)
 - Nuts and peanut butter
 - Salty foods

Environmental Triggers:

- Exposure to certain scents or chemicals may trigger headaches
- Examples are: perfume, cleaning chemicals, air fresheners, smoke, pollution, flowers
- Not everyone is sensitive to these possible triggers. It is different for everyone.
- Weather changes can trigger headache. The barometer falling before a storm to changes in temperature can make headaches worse.
- Certain lights, video games, or computer screens, such as tablets, laptops or cell phones, may cause eye strain, which then may trigger headache.
- Some people are sensitive to loud noise, such as a loud bass beat in music or construction noise, which then can trigger headache.
- Excessive sun may trigger headache along with sunburn, dehydration, and overheating.
- Motion sickness may trigger headache. Being well rested, well hydrated and eating before flying, driving, boating or other types of motion (swings, rollercoasters) are recommended. Do not read in the car or boat if you are prone to motion sickness. There are various medicines and tools (wristbands) that can help with motion sickness.

Sleep:

- Regular sleep may help decrease the number of headaches. It is important for children and teens to get between 7-12h of sleep per night.
- When sleep is disrupted or irregular, headaches may be more frequent.
- Vacation, holidays, sleepovers and high stress times, such as exam periods, may make headaches worse. Regular sleeping patterns are very important to prevent migraine.
- Continue your regular sleeping routine every night, including holidays, school vacations and weekends. This may be hard to do but an easy way to prevent headache.
- Stop all screen time 1 hour prior to bed, and try to keep them out of your bedroom. This includes TV, computers, tablets, and cell phones. No sleeping with your cell phone!

Exercise:

- Regular exercise can reduce the frequency and intensity of your migraines.
- Exercising 3-5 times per week, doing activities you like, can really help you feel better.
- Exercise helps the brain release endorphins, the “feel good” hormones.
- Swimming is a good exercise because it stretches your neck muscles.
- Yoga can help with your body’s alignment (posture) and flexibility, reduce muscle tension, and teach relaxation breathing. There are postures that are especially helpful for your head, neck and upper back, where people often hold tension that causes headache. .
- Any activity that raises your heart rate and makes you sweat will improve your mood and your health, and decrease your headaches. This works even if you exercise only 15 minutes at a time.

Stress Reduction:

- Everyone has both good stress and bad stress in their daily lives.
- When stress is increased, headache may happen more easily or more often.
- Stress reduction activities are important, such as physical activity and exercise.
- Find a way to wind down at the end of the day before sleep.
- Different things work for different people. You may try reading, a warm bath, soft music, meditations, visualization or guided imagery.
- You can get help in developing your own personal techniques by working with a counselor, psychologist or psychiatrist.
- Missing school because of headache may be necessary sometimes, but missing many days of school can add lots of stress. Try to go to school every day you can.

Contraception:

- Young women who have migraines with aura should not smoke or use birth control pills.
- If birth control pills are required, talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner about the risks and benefits.
- You women who have migraine with aura have an increased risk of having stroke when taking high estrogen birth control pills. Low dose estrogen or progesterone only contraception is advised.

Complementary/Alternative Interventions:

- Some people report benefit from interventions that are not medicine based. Examples of some of these are: massage therapy, naturopathy, reiki, acupressure, acupuncture, yoga, exercise, biofeedback, aromatherapy or many other modalities. Please check with your doctor or nurse practitioner about these options.
- Not every intervention will work for every person and responses are very individual.
- Therapies need to be suited to each person.
- Many of these interventions will have some out-of-pocket costs.

- Some insurances cover acupuncture, when treatment is provided by a Doctor (Medical Acupuncture).
- Some people use health Care Savings Accounts to pay for complementary/alternative therapies, like massage.

Rescue Therapy:

- Rescue medication is what you take when migraines occur.
- It may be one or several medications that you take as soon as you get a migraine.
- You and your doctor/nurse practitioner will work together to find the best plan for you, when you get a migraine.
- Rescue medication is sometimes taken with another medication to reduce nausea. Take these medications together and it can help to stop throwing up and help the rescue medication to work faster.
- It is important to take these medications as directed, often as soon as you feel like you are getting a migraine, so the headache will not hurt so much or last as long as usual.

Dose Limit:

- **Rescue medications should not be used more than 3 times per week.** Examples of rescue medications are Tylenol, ibuprofen (motrin or advil), naproxen, aleve, or Imitrex.
- If headaches are occurring more frequently, the headache plan may need to be adjusted and preventative medication started.
- Taking these medications more than 3 times per week may lead to medication-overuse headache, which is a headache that occurs more frequently over time and requires higher doses of medications to reduce pain.
- Migraine attacks should be treated early, so that the migraine will be less painful or even stop it before it gets bad.
- Take the medication with 15 minutes of the start of the aura (symptoms that occur before the pain starts such as vision changes or tingling) or the headache. Then rest in a quiet, dim or dark room for 20-30 minutes.
- At school, children/teenagers need to be able to get their medications through the school nurse. Teachers need to know that the child/teen must go to the school nurse to follow the rescue therapy plan.
- A letter can be provided for the school to explain the rescue therapy plan and that you should be allowed to carry water/sports drink and a snack with you during the school day.
- Have an 'attack pack' with you or your parent when travelling. Include your medication, water or sports drink and a snack.

Daily Therapy:

- Preventative medications help reduce the number of migraine attacks and will help make the migraines that do occur easier to treat with rescue medication. They will not stop a migraine attack once it has started.
- Preventive therapy is used every day, whether you have a headache or not.
- It is important to take your preventative medication every day. If you miss too many doses, you will not have enough medication in your body to prevent migraine attacks.
- It often takes 4-6 weeks on the full dose of medication to start feeling better. The goal is to reduce migraine attacks by 50%. This happens slowly over the first 4-6 months. If there is no change at the end of 6 weeks, please call the Headache Clinic.
- Often these medications are not started at the full dose. The dose is slowly increased over a few weeks. The goal is to take as low a dose of medication as you need to prevent migraine and also to avoid side effects from the medications.
- Common side effects from these medications are sleepiness and stomach upset. Most side effects will stop after 4-6 weeks.

- Preventative medications are taken for 6 to 12 months. At the end of 6 months, the Headache Clinic staff will check in with you about how well the medication is doing to prevent your headaches. The medication may be increased, changed, or stopped, depending on how you are doing.
- When it is time to stop the preventative medications, you will be given instructions on how to decrease the medication gradually. It is important to follow these instructions and not just stop the medications. This helps to reduce and avoid any side effects, like seizures, dizziness, low blood pressure and others.

When to contact the Headache Clinic:

- If there is a change in the pattern of headaches.
- These are the red flags to tell the Headache Clinic about:
 - Waking in the middle of the night with headache and vomiting, if these are a change.
 - Headache and vomiting brought on by straining, lifting heavy objects, or going to the bathroom.
 - Changes in behavior or mood or not being completely well in between migraine attacks.
 - Symptoms that do not go away between headaches.
 - New symptoms such as numbness, tingling, or loss of speech prior to headache.
 - Side effects from medications that are difficult to manage, such as sleepiness, nausea or abdominal pain.

How to keep a Headache Diary:

- The headache diary helps you identify headache triggers.
 - Keep a notebook for 2-3 months or a minimum of 12-15 headaches.
 - Highlight things that happen with most of your headaches and those things may be your triggers.
- Write down the date and time the headache starts, and how long it lasts. .
- Write down the headache features:
- Rate your headache pain on a scale of 0-10:
 - 0= no pain; 1-3= mild; 4-6= moderate; 7-10= severe.
 - Pain rated as 1 is minor and activity is not changed, pain rated as 10 is the worst pain ever.
 - Where is the headache? Is it on one side or both?
 - How would you describe the pain? (throbbing, sharp, stabbing, burning, squeezing, etc)
 - What other symptoms go with the headache? (bothered by lights, noise or smells? Feel nauseated? Did you throw up? Did you have an aura or feel like a headache was coming on before it happened?)
- Write down possible triggers:
- Sleep: how much sleep did you have the night before? Was it a good sleep? Did you sleep through the night? Did you wake up a lot? Did you sleep in late?
 - What foods did you eat or drink 24 hours before the headache started?
 - How much did you drink in the 24 hours before the headache?
 - Eating pattern: did you skip meals? Did you eat late because you were busy? Did you skip breakfast?
 - How stressful is your life right now?
 - Pick one word to describe how you are feeling today. (Tired, angry, upset, happy, etc)
- Treatment:
- How did you treat your headache? What medicine did you take? Did you rest and sleep?
 - Did you miss school, work, sports or play because of the headache?