

**Migraine:**  
A severe headache that is often accompanied by other symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and sensitivity to light and sound.



A migraine headache is a type of headache that can cause intense throbbing or pulsing, and in severe cases, can be debilitating. Migraine headaches are commonly accompanied by other symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light and sound. Migraine headaches can cause significant pain for hours or days, ranging from 4–72 hours. Some individuals experience sensory warning symptoms, also known as an aura, such as: flashes of light, blind spots or even feeling a tingling sensation in one's arm or leg. Even after the headache and pain subside, some individuals may have residual symptoms. Most individuals experience their first migraine attack during adolescence.

### **Causes:**

Though the cause of migraine headaches is still not fully understood, it is known that genetics and

environmental factors play a key role in migraine attacks. There are some common “triggers” that may cause a migraine headache to occur. These triggers include but are not limited to:

- Hormonal changes
- Diet
- Stress
- Sensory Stimuli
- Changes in wake-sleep pattern
- Physical factors
- Medication
- Changes in environment

There are several things that can make you more prone to having migraine headaches. According to the Mayo Clinic, 90% of people with migraines have a family history that consists of migraine headaches. Age is another factor. Migraines can come on at any age, but a majority of those who suffer from migraines had their first attack in their adolescence. Gender can also be a key factor in migraines as women are three times more likely to experience migraine attacks than men.

## Stages of Migraines:

### Stage 1: Prodrome

Sometimes individuals can anticipate a migraine coming on. One or two days before the attack, you may notice changes that will signal an oncoming migraine. Some of these changes could include:

- Depression
- Hyperactivity
- Constipation
- Food Cravings
- Uncontrollable yawning
- Irritability

### Stage 2: Aura

An aura is a sensory warning produced by the nervous system. Auras can produce visual, motor, sensory and/ or verbal disturbances. These symptoms tend to come on gradually and build over a period of time, typically lasting anywhere from 20-60 minutes. These can include symptoms such as seeing shapes or flashes of light, sensations in the extremities, or speech impairment.

### Stage 3: Attack

Stage three is when the migraine attack is actually taking place. A migraine can last anywhere from 4-72 hours and the frequency will vary from individual to individual. Migraine attacks can range from once to several times a month. Some females may find that a migraine may be triggered at certain points of their menstrual cycle. During a migraine attack, one may experience the following symptoms:

- Throbbing/pulsating pain
- Pain on one side or both sides of the head
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Sensitivity to light, sound or even smell
- Blurred vision
- Becoming lightheaded

### Stage 4: Postdrome

The postdrome stage occurs once the attack

has subsided and leaves one feeling physically drained.

## Treatment:

Migraine headaches are not curable but can be managed with the help of your physician. There are two main categories of medications used to manage migraines:

**Pain Relieving or Abortive Medications** - Taken while a migraine attack is happening and are designed to impede the symptoms that are occurring. There are a variety of medications available to help treat or stop a migraine. These medications come as tablets, capsules, dissolving tablets, nasal sprays, suppositories and injections. The following is a list of some of the most common medications that can be used to treat a migraine attack:

**Aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen, almotriptan, frovatriptan, naratriptan, sumatriptan, rizatriptan, zolmitriptan.**

**Preventive Medications** - Taken to help reduce the frequency and intensity of a migraine. Preventive medications are used as maintenance medications, and are intended to be taken on a daily basis. Although many of these medications are used to treat other conditions such as high blood pressure, depression and seizure disorders, they have been proven effective in preventing migraines. The following is a list of common preventative medications that can be used to prevent the occurrence of migraines:

**propranolol, verapamil, amitriptyline, venlafaxine, Botox, topiramate.**

As always, ProAct encourages you to consult your physician about which treatments may be the most helpful to you. Some medications may carry precautions or may be contraindicated to those with certain medical conditions or different age groups.

Wishing you a happy and healthy summer season.

Sincerely,

Your ProAct Team

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For questions or comments please call : 1.877.635.9545

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