Managing Migraine

Migraine is a serious disease of the brain that's far more complex than a run-of-the-mill headache. The good news is there are tools to assist you along your migraine journey. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

**Vocabulary to Know**

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Episodic Migraine</td>
<td>People with episodic migraine have headaches 0 to 14 days per month. Research suggests about 2.5 percent of people with episodic migraine transform to chronic migraine (see below) per year.</td>
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<td>Chronic Migraine</td>
<td>People with chronic migraine experience a migraine headache 15 or more days per month for more than three months.</td>
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<td>Prodrome</td>
<td>The first phase of a migraine attack that may occur hours, even days, prior to a migraine attack. Symptoms of a prodrome are highly variable but some more common ones include fatigue, depression or irritability, and excessive yawning.</td>
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<td>Aura</td>
<td>The second phase of a migraine, but only occurs in a little over one quarter of all attacks. An aura is characterized by neurological symptoms, mostly visual, sensory, speech, or, rarely, motor disturbances. These symptoms are reversible, last five minutes up to one hour, and generally occur prior to the headache phase.</td>
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<td>Postdrome</td>
<td>The fourth phase of a migraine attack, occurring after the headache, and lasting hours to days. The symptoms, attributed to both the migraine attack itself, as well as the medication used to treat the migraine, are variable, but most commonly include poor concentration, fatigue, and a depressed mood.</td>
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<td>Silent Migraine</td>
<td>Also called an &quot;acephalgic migraine&quot; and describes a migraine attack that includes a migraine aura but no headache.</td>
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<td>Photophobia</td>
<td>Sensitivity to light. Photophobia is a common symptom of a migraine attack, and in fact, is one of the criteria used to diagnose migraine.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phonophobia</td>
<td>Sensitivity to sound. Like photophobia, phonophobia is a common symptom of a migraine attack and is part of the criteria used to diagnose migraine.</td>
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<td>Triptan</td>
<td>A medication used to treat moderate to severe migraine attacks, as well as mild migraine attacks that do not respond to over-the-counter painkiller medications, like ibuprofen. Triptans are available in different formulations, including a pill, injection, nasal spray, or oral dissolving tablet.</td>
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<td>Calcitonin Gene-Related Peptide (CGRP)</td>
<td>A protein that is released during a migraine attack. Once released, CGRP dilates (&quot;widens&quot;) blood vessels surrounding the brain and transmits pain signals to the brain. Two drugs that target either CGRP itself or its receptor (&quot;docking site&quot;) are currently approved for migraine prevention.</td>
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Questions to Ask
These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your migraine.

About Symptoms
- Why do I sometimes feel “funny” or unwell just prior to and/or after a migraine headache?
- Why do I experience light sensitivity with my migraines and how can I make it go away?
- Does experiencing auras with my migraines put me at a higher risk for having a stroke?
- What should I do if a migraine feels different from prior attacks (for example, it's more severe or lasting longer than usual)?

About Causes & Risk Factors
- What is the best way to figure out my unique triggers?
- Why do I experience migraines just prior to menstruation?
- Are my children at a higher risk for developing migraines?
- Why are migraines more common in women than men?

About Diagnosis
- Is there a blood or imaging test, like an MRI, that can diagnose migraine?
- Should I see a headache specialist for my migraines?
- What are the different types of migraines and what does this mean for my migraine care?

About Treatment
- Due to nausea and/or vomiting, I cannot take a pill for my migraine attacks. Is there another treatment option?
- How do I know if I am a candidate for a migraine preventive drug?
- Are there any side effects associated with the new anti-CGRP migraine preventive drugs?
- Are there any complementary and alternative medications or therapies available?
- What can I take for my migraines during pregnancy?

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About Coping

- I’m concerned my migraines are contributing to my depression and/or anxiety. What should I do?
- My child has migraines. How can I help him or her?
- Should I tell my boss or my friends about my migraines?

About Living With Migraine

- Is there a specific diet that can help prevent my migraine attacks?
- Is it safe to take birth control pills if I have migraines?
- Do migraines worsen or improve in menopause?
- If I am overweight or obese, will losing weight help my migraines?
- What lifestyle habits can I adopt to minimize the number and severity of my migraine attacks?

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