



Migraine Matters ***- A Student's Guide***





What is Migraine?

Migraine is a neurological condition (related to your brain) that occurs again and again. It can consist of some or even all of the following:

- A severe throbbing headache usually on one side of the head made worse by movement
- Lasts for hours or even a few days
- Nausea, sometimes vomiting
- Sensitivity to loud noise, bright light or strong smells

Everybody knows someone who has migraine. In Ireland, it affects about 400,000 people. One in 10 children experience migraine before the age of 18. Very often young people are absent from school as a result of an attack. Yet many questions about the condition remain unanswered.

If you have migraine, it is important to recognise it at an early stage and learn how to control it. This booklet can help reduce the impact that the condition has on YOUR life.



- Some people have changes in their vision, such as dark spots, coloured spots, sparkles, stars and zigzag lines. This is called the Aura
- Numbness, tingling or weakness on one side can also occur
- Children and teenagers sometimes get stomachache with their migraine, but this usually stops as you get older.

*"TAKE AWAY THE SENSATION
INSIDE, BITTERSWEET MIGRAINE
IN MY HEAD, IT'S LIKE THROBBING
TOOTHACHE OF THE MIND I
CAN'T TAKE THIS PEELING
ANYMORE"
FROM "GIVE ME NOVACAINE"
GREEN DAY*

What causes Migraine?

Changes in the Brain

At the start of a migraine, certain chemicals are released in the brain, causing the blood vessels around the brain to narrow. This causes the Aura. Shortly afterwards, the blood vessels expand again causing the headache. Nobody knows why this happens.

"AN HOUR OF PAIN IS AS LONG AS A DAY OF PLEASURE"
HIPPOCRATES

Trigger Factors

Most people have trigger factors. Triggers vary from person to person, and although they do not actually cause migraine, they can bring about attacks if you already have migraine.



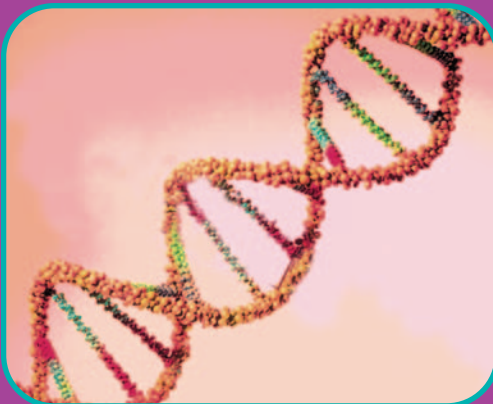
Illustration by Rob Jones. Used with permission from "Drug Facts For Young People." © 2003

Genetics

The genes passed down to you by your parents give your body instructions about what to do. Scientists have come across a number of genes linked to migraine and agree that if one or both parents have migraine then it increases the likelihood of their children having it also.

Some of the most common triggers are:

- Certain foods, such as cheese, citrus fruits, chocolate, fizzy drinks, nuts or preserved meats
- Skipping meals
- Lack of sleep and/or oversleeping
- Stress or anxiety
- Too much physical exercise (dehydration)
- Screen flicker from long hours playing computer games or watching TV
- Weather changes
- Hormonal changes, e.g. onset of puberty, especially in girls; menstruation.



The Migraine Diary

Keeping a Migraine Diary allows you to keep a record of your migraine and will help your doctor to make a diagnosis. You can identify your trigger factors by writing down the events of the previous two days whenever you get a migraine. You should record the food you ate, whether you missed a meal, whether you stayed up late, had a lie in, etc.

After 6-12 months, the diary should start to show some patterns. Contact the Migraine Association for a Diary.

*"DO I LOOK VERY PALE?" SAID
TWEEDLEDUM, COMING UP TO
HAVE HIS HELMET TIED ON.
"WELL-YES-A LITTLE," ALICE
REPLIED GENTLY.
"I'M VERY BRAVE, GENERALLY,"
HE WENT ON IN A LOW VOICE,
"ONLY TODAY I HAPPEN TO
HAVE A HEADACHE."
LEWIS CARROLL, THROUGH THE
LOOKING GLASS*

How can you stop Migraine interfering with your lifestyle?

Don't feel migraine is controlling your life. Here are some steps you can take that might help:

- Learn to predict a migraine coming on. For example, some people feel very tired just before an attack while others feel very energetic

- Have regular bedtime and getting up times
- Try to keep regular eating times, even if you're in a rush or don't feel hungry
- Taking a break from studies, walking in the fresh air or listening to some music can be relaxing and can help ward off migraine
- Regular exercise also helps, but don't over-exert yourself
- Make sure you always have enough water to drink
- Avoid falling behind in your schoolwork. This can lead to unnecessary stress
- Use a comfortable chair and desk for doing your homework and make sure you are working in well-lit conditions
- Don't bottle up emotions. Talk to a friend, teacher or family member if something is bothering you
- If you have been prescribed medication, always have it to hand.



How can we treat Migraine?

Migraine has been around for thousands of years. Down through the ages there have been some very interesting and unusual treatments.



- In 7000BC, it was considered a good idea to drill holes in the skulls of people with migraine to release the evil demons believed to be responsible
- The ancient Egyptians treated migraine by strapping a pottery crocodile to the heads of sufferers as an offering to the gods
- In the 17th century, doctors used to swing their patients around in circles to force blood away from the head.

"COMPARING A HEADACHE TO A MIGRAINE IS LIKE COMPARING STEALING A PEN TO ROBBING A BANK"

TONY CASCARINO, FOOTBALLER

Unsurprisingly, none of these treatments have survived the test of time, but other ancient remedies still provide relief nowadays:

- Sleep
- Retreat to a quiet dark room
- Cold therapy, e.g an ice pack or a cool damp towel
- Acupressure and self-massage.

Treatments

Acute Treatments are taken to get rid of the pain when attacks happen. Always ask your parents or your doctor before using any medications, and never take more than your allowed dose. If your parents or doctor have given you medication to take, use it as soon as you get the first signs of your migraine.

Preventive Treatments might be prescribed by your doctor if you have very severe or frequent migraine. Usually, it involves taking medication every day for a few months. If you are taking preventive medications, it is important to keep taking them in the way the doctor recommended, even if they can take a while to start working. Some people get unwanted side-effects while using medications. The most commonly reported side effects are drowsiness and weight gain. If this happens, tell your parents or doctor.

Complementary Treatment such as yoga therapy and biofeedback are seen to be helpful by many people with migraine. For further information visit our website at www.migraine.ie.

Famous people who have suffered with Migraine

There is no reason why anyone who suffers with migraine should feel they are unable to follow their dreams. Many famous people with migraine have risen to the top of their profession.

Sport

Recently, tennis superstar Serena Williams referred to her migraine and how it hasn't prevented her from pursuing the sport she loves.

"THE PAIN INSIDE MY HEAD WAS SO INTENSE THAT I FELT SICK AND DIZZY, AND AS I WALKED ONTO THE COURT, THE LIGHT FELT AS IF IT WAS BURNING INTO THE BACK OF MY EYES." SERENA WILLIAMS, TENNIS PLAYER



Footballer Freddie Ljungberg suffers with migraine and blamed his poor self-management as the reason for a repeat

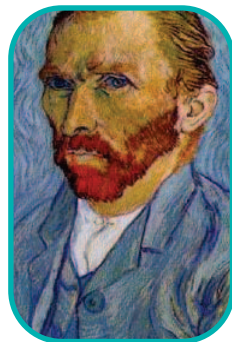
attack. After missing a game Freddie said:

"THE DOCTOR FELT THE SECOND ONE WAS BECAUSE I PUSHED MYSELF TO TRAIN TOO SOON AFTER THE FIRST MIGRAINE. IF I HAD RESTED FOR LONGER I WOULDN'T HAVE HAD THE SECOND ATTACK." FREDDIE LJUNGBERG FOOTBALLER

Actors

Friends' star Lisa Kudrow spent ten years playing the role of viewer's favourite airhead Phoebe, while managing her migraine. Other Hollywood stars with migraine include screen legend Elizabeth Taylor and supermodel Elle MacPherson.

Historical Figures



Julius Caesar, Vincent Van Gogh, Napoleon, Charles Dickens, Jonathan Swift, Picasso and Virginia Woolf all suffered with migraine. Lewis Carroll, author of *Alice in Wonderland*, had such severe migraine that it is thought his attacks influenced his writing.

Migraine at exam time

In extreme circumstances, special arrangements can be made to facilitate students with migraine when taking state examinations. The school needs a letter from the your GP/Consultant before approaching the State Examinations Commission. Reasonable accommodations may be made on a case-by-case basis depending on the individual circumstances.

- Allowing a student to sit the exam on their own with their own superintendent
- Providing a tape recorder to record the answers if the candidate cannot write due to an attack
- Allowing a delayed examination start time. The start of the examination may be delayed provided the candidate has not had contact with other candidates or any person who may have had sight of the question paper or have knowledge of the contents of the question paper. Candidates may not, however, take an examination on a later date under any circumstances.

"THE MEREST SCHOOLGIRL WHEN SHE FALLS IN LOVE HAS SHAKESPEARE OR KEATS TO SPEAK HER MIND, BUT LET A SUPPERER TRY TO DESCRIBE A PAIN IN HIS HEAD TO A DOCTOR AND LANGUAGE AT ONCE RUNS DRY."

VIRGINIA WOOLF, AUTHOR

Your school may also authorise breaks or rest periods in each examination session that are warranted by the physical or medical condition of the candidate. In this case, the time taken for rest or as a break may be compensated for at the end of the exam up to a maximum of 20 minutes.

For further information contact:

Reasonable Accommodations Section,
State Examinations Commission,
Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co Westmeath.

Web: www.examinations.ie

Email: sec_specialneeds@education.gov.ie

Phone: 090-6442781



The Life Cycle of Migraine

Migraine can change as you get older. Young children sometimes have a very mild headache or no headache at all, but are very sick with their migraine. As you grow older, you might notice that your attacks get longer and are less associated with stomach symptoms. Headaches sometimes become more severe as you get older. Sometimes migraine can disappear altogether.

MIGRAINE - DOCTOR, DOCTOR, WON'T YOU HELP ME PLEASE? MIGRAINE - DOCTOR, DOCTOR, I'M DOWN ON MY KNEES. MIGRAINE - I FEEL IT RUN FROM MY TOES TO MY BRAIN. MIGRAINE - TRIED EVERY POTION, BUT IT CAN'T BE TAMED 'MIGRAINE' - THE CORAL



Who can help you?

- Your parents and teachers are there to support you.
- Your doctor and pharmacist will be able to answer any questions you have.
- Call the Migraine Association of Ireland.



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CALL-SAVE HELPLINE
1850 200 378

(10.00 – 4.00, Monday to Friday)

Advice Line: 01 797 9848

(Specialist Nurse 2.00pm – 4.00pm, Monday – Thursday)

Phone: 01 806 4121 **Fax:** 01 806 4122

Address: The Migraine Association of Ireland,
All Hallows College, Gracepark Road,
Drumcondra, Dublin 9.

E-mail: info@migraine.ie

www.migraine.ie