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Migraine

What are migraines?

Migraines are a recurring type of headache. They cause moderate to severe pain that is throbbing or pulsing. The pain is often on one side of your head. You may also have other symptoms, such as nausea and weakness. You may be sensitive to light and sound.

What causes migraines?

Researchers believe that migraine has a genetic cause. There are also a number of factors that can trigger a migraine. These factors vary from person to person, and they include

- Stress [<https://medlineplus.gov/stress.html>]
- Anxiety
- Hormonal changes in women
- Bright or flashing lights
- Loud noises
- Strong smells
- Medicines
- Too much or not enough sleep
- Sudden changes in weather or environment
- Overexertion (too much physical activity)
- Tobacco [<https://medlineplus.gov/smoking.html>]
- Caffeine [<https://medlineplus.gov/caffeine.html>] or caffeine withdrawal
- Skipped meals
- Medication overuse (taking medicine for migraines too often)

Some people have found that certain foods or ingredients can trigger headaches, especially when they are combined with other triggers. These foods and ingredients include

- Alcohol
- Chocolate
- Aged cheeses

- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Some fruits and nuts
- Fermented or pickled goods
- Yeast
- Cured or processed meats

Who is at risk for migraines?

About 12 percent of Americans get migraines. They can affect anyone, but you are more likely to have them if you

- **Are a woman.** Women are three times more likely than men to get migraines.
- **Have a family history of migraines.** Most people with migraines have family members who have migraines.
- **Have other medical conditions,** such as depression [<https://medlineplus.gov/depression.html>] , anxiety [<https://medlineplus.gov/anxiety.html>] , bipolar disorder [<https://medlineplus.gov/bipolardisorder.html>] , sleep disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/sleepdisorders.html>] , and epilepsy [<https://medlineplus.gov/epilepsy.html>] .

What are the symptoms of migraines?

There are four different phases of migraines. You may not always go through every phase each time you have a migraine.

- **Prodrome.** This phase starts up to 24 hours before you get the migraine. You have early signs and symptoms, such as food cravings, unexplained mood changes, uncontrollable yawning, fluid retention, and increased urination.
- **Aura.** If you have this phase, you might see flashing or bright lights or zig-zag lines. You may have muscle weakness or feel like you are being touched or grabbed. An aura can happen just before or during a migraine.
- **Headache.** A migraine usually starts gradually and then becomes more severe. It typically causes throbbing or pulsing pain, which is often on one side of your head. But sometimes you can have a migraine without a headache. Other migraine symptoms may include
 - Increased sensitivity to light, noise, and odors
 - Nausea and vomiting
 - Worsened pain when you move, cough, or sneeze
- **Postdrome** (following the headache). You may feel exhausted, weak, and confused after a migraine. This can last up to a day.

Migraines are more common in the morning; people often wake up with them. Some people have migraines at predictable times, such as before menstruation or on weekends following a stressful week of work.

How are migraines diagnosed?

To make a diagnosis, your health care provider will

- Take your medical history
- Ask about your symptoms
- Do a physical and neurological exam

An important part of diagnosing migraines is to rule out other medical conditions which could be causing the symptoms. So you may also have blood tests, an MRI [<https://medlineplus.gov/mriscans.html>] or CT [<https://medlineplus.gov/ctscans.html>] scan, or other tests.

How are migraines treated?

There is no cure for migraines. Treatment focuses on relieving symptoms and preventing additional attacks.

There are different types of medicines to relieve symptoms. They include triptan drugs, ergotamine drugs, and **pain relievers** [<https://medlineplus.gov/painrelievers.html>] . The sooner you take the medicine, the more effective it is.

There are also other things you can do to feel better:

- Resting with your eyes closed in a quiet, darkened room
- Placing a cool cloth or ice pack on your forehead
- Drinking fluids

There are some lifestyle changes you can make to prevent migraines:

- Stress management strategies, such as exercise, relaxation techniques, and biofeedback, may reduce the number and severity of migraines. Biofeedback uses electronic devices to teach you to control certain body functions, such as your heartbeat, blood pressure, and muscle tension.
- Make a log of what seems to trigger your migraines. You can learn what you need to avoid, such as certain foods and medicines. It also help you figure out what you should do, such as establishing a consistent sleep schedule and eating regular meals.
- Hormone therapy may help some women whose migraines seem to be linked to their **menstrual cycle** [<https://medlineplus.gov/menstruation.html>]
- If you have obesity [<https://medlineplus.gov/obesity.html>] , losing weight [<https://medlineplus.gov/weightcontrol.html>] may also be helpful

If you have frequent or severe migraines, you may need to take medicines to prevent further attacks. Talk with your health care provider about which drug would be right for you.

Certain natural treatments, such as riboflavin (vitamin B2) and coenzyme Q10, may help prevent migraines. If your magnesium level is low, you can try taking magnesium. There is also an herb, butterbur, which some people take to prevent migraines. But butterbur may not be safe for long-term use. Always check with your health care provider before taking any supplements.

NIH: National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

Start Here

- Headache: Hope through Research [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education/Hope-Through-Research/Headache-Hope-Through-Research>]  (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)
Also in Spanish [https://espanol.ninds.nih.gov/trastornos/dolor_de_cabeza.htm]
- Migraine [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/migraine-headache/symptoms-causes/syc-20360201?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
- Migraine [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/All-Disorders/Migraine-Information-Page>]  (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)
- Migraines [<https://familydoctor.org/condition/migraines/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/condicion/migranas/?adfree=true>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Do I need an imaging study for my headache? [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/need-imaging-study-headache/>] (American Migraine Foundation)
- Sinus Headache [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/sinus-headaches/>] (American Migraine Foundation)
- Visual Disturbances: Related to Migraine or Not? [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/visual-disturbances-related-to-migraine-or-not/>] (American Migraine Foundation)
- When to Go to the Emergency Room for a Headache or Migraine [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/when-to-go-to-the-emergency-room-for-a-headache-or-migraine/>] (American Migraine Foundation)

Treatments and Therapies

- Acupuncture: In Depth [<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/acupuncture/introduction>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)
- Acute Therapy: Why Not Over-The-Counter or Other Nonspecific Options? [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/acute-therapy-why-not-over-the-counter-or-other-nonspecific-options/>] (American Migraine Foundation)
- Butterbur [<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/butterbur>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)
- Commonly Used Acute Migraine Treatments [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/commonly-used-acute-migraine-treatments/>] (American Migraine Foundation)
- Feverfew [<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/feverfew>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)
- Headaches: In Depth [<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/pain/headachefacts.htm>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)
- Relaxation Techniques for Health [<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/stress/relaxation.htm>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)
- Tips for Starting Yoga in Adults with Migraines [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/understanding-migrainetips-for-starting-yoga-in-adults-with-migraines/>] (American Migraine Foundation)

Living With

- Headache Hygiene -- What Is It? [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/understanding-migraineheadache-hygiene-what-is-it/>] (American Migraine Foundation)
- Low Tyramine Headache Diet [<https://headaches.org/2007/10/25/low-tyramine-diet-for-migraine/>] (National Headache Foundation) - **PDF**
- Migraine's House of Headaches...and Visiting the Neighbors [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/migraines-house-of-headaches-and-visiting-the-neighbors/>] (American Migraine Foundation)
- Migraines: Simple Steps to Head Off the Pain [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/migraine-headache/in-depth/migraines/ART-20047242?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/diseases-conditions/migraine-headache/in-depth/migraines/art-20047242?p=1>]

Related Issues

- Abuse, Maltreatment and PTSD and Their Relationship to Migraine [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/abuse-maltreatment-and-ptsd-and-their-relationship-to-migraine/>] (American Migraine Foundation)

- Alcohol and Migraine [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/alcohol-and-migraine/>] (American Migraine Foundation)
- Allodynia: When Touch Hurts But Shouldn't [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/allodynia-when-touch-hurts-but-shouldnt/>] (American Migraine Foundation)
- Caffeine and Migraine [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/caffeine-and-migraine/>] (American Migraine Foundation)
- Can Weather Changes Trigger Migraines? [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/migraine-headache/expert-answers/migraine-headache/faq-20058505?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/diseases-conditions/migraine-headache/expert-answers/migraine-headache/faq-20058505?p=1>]
- Depression and Anxiety in Migraine Patients [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/depression-and-anxiety-in-migraine-patients/>] (American Migraine Foundation)
- Migraine and Common Morbidities [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/migraine-and-common-co-morbidities/>] (American Migraine Foundation)
- Migraine Medications and Antidepressants: A Risky Mix? [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/migraine-headache/expert-answers/migraine-medications/FAQ-20058166?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/diseases-conditions/migraine-headache/expert-answers/migraine-medications/faq-20058166?p=1>]
- Migraines and Gastrointestinal Problems: Is There a Link? [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/migraine-headache/expert-answers/migraines/FAQ-20058268?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/diseases-conditions/migraine-headache/expert-answers/migraines/faq-20058268?p=1>]
- Stress and Migraine [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/stress-migraine/>] (American Migraine Foundation)

Specifics

- Migraine with Aura [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/migraine-with-aura/symptoms-causes/syc-20352072?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/diseases-conditions/migraine-with-aura/symptoms-causes/syc-20352072?p=1>]
- What Is an Ocular Migraine? [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/migraine-headache/expert-answers/ocular-migraine/FAQ-20058113?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/diseases-conditions/migraine-headache/expert-answers/ocular-migraine/faq-20058113?p=1>]

Genetics

- Genetics Home Reference: cyclic vomiting syndrome [<https://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/condition/cyclic-vomiting-syndrome>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Genetics Home Reference: familial hemiplegic migraine [<https://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/condition/familial-hemiplegic-migraine>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Genetics Home Reference: migraine [<https://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/condition/migraine>]  (National Library of Medicine)
- Genetics Home Reference: sporadic hemiplegic migraine [<https://ghr.nlm.nih.gov/condition/sporadic-hemiplegic-migraine>]  (National Library of Medicine)

Statistics and Research

- Impact of Migraine on School Performance [<https://n.neurology.org/content/neurology/79/18/e168.full.pdf>] (American Academy of Neurology) - **PDF**
- Infant Colic and Migraine: Is There a Connection? [<https://n.neurology.org/content/neurology/79/13/e112.full.pdf>] (American Academy of Neurology) - **PDF**

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Migraine Disorders [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search/open/condition=%22Migraine+Disorders%22>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: The functional alterations in primary migraine: A systematic review and meta-analysis... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32150049>]
- Article: The crossover design for migraine preventives: an analyses of four randomized... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/31881823>]
- Article: Erenumab safety and efficacy in migraine: A systematic review and meta-analysis... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/31876735>]
- Migraine -- see more articles [[https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=migraine+disorders\[majr\]+AND+english\[la\]+AND+humans\[mh\]+AND+\(review\[pt\]+OR+guideline\[pt\]+OR+clinical+trial\[pt\]+OR+patient+education+handout\[pt\]+OR+jsubsetk\[text\]+OR+jsubsetn\[text\]+OR+systematic\[sb\]\)+NOT+\(letter\[pt\]+OR+editorial\[pt\]+OR+case+reports\[pt\]+OR+comment\[pt\]\)+AND+%22last+1+Year%22\[edat\]](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=migraine+disorders[majr]+AND+english[la]+AND+humans[mh]+AND+(review[pt]+OR+guideline[pt]+OR+clinical+trial[pt]+OR+patient+education+handout[pt]+OR+jsubsetk[text]+OR+jsubsetn[text]+OR+systematic[sb])+NOT+(letter[pt]+OR+editorial[pt]+OR+case+reports[pt]+OR+comment[pt])+AND+%22last+1+Year%22[edat])]

Find an Expert

- Find a Doctor or Treatment [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/find-a-doctor/>] (American Migraine Foundation)
- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.ninds.nih.gov/>]

Children

- Migraine Variants in Children [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/migraine-in-children/>] (American Migraine Foundation)

Teenagers

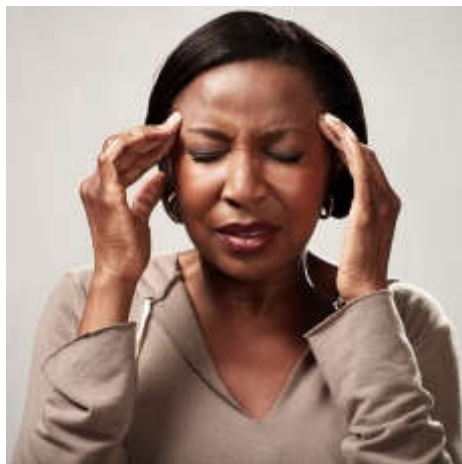
- Migraine Headaches [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/migraines.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/migraines-esp.html>]

Women

- Migraine [<https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/migraine>] (Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/migraine>]

Patient Handouts

- Managing migraines at home [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000420.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000420.htm>]
- Migraine [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000709.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000709.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Managing migraines at home [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000420.htm>]

Migraine [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000709.htm>]

Serotonin syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007272.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Headache [<https://medlineplus.gov/headache.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Migraine* is the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke [<http://www.ninds.nih.gov/>]

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