



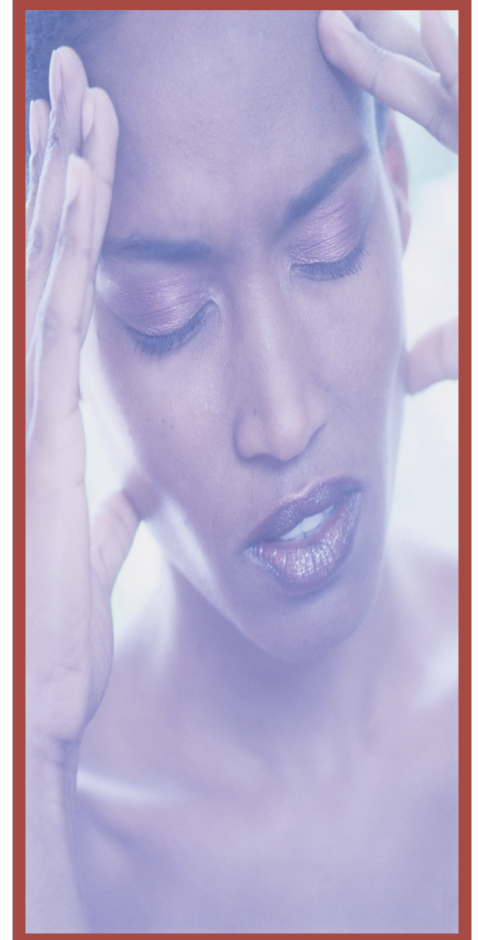
Migraine

Migraine and its causes

Most of us have had a headache at some time in our lives and there are many different types. Although migraine is commonly experienced as a severe headache, it is typically accompanied by other disabling symptoms and can have a major impact on quality of life. Eight million people in the UK have migraine. It is approximately two to three times as common in women as in men and can also affect children, usually in the mid-teens. For 70-80% of people with migraine, there is a family history.

The exact cause of migraine is not fully understood but it may be due to the release of abnormal levels of inflammatory substances in the brain which cause localised swelling of blood vessels, pressure on nerves and, hence, pain.

Certain things can trigger a migraine attack and these 'trigger factors' can be *emotional*, such as stress and depression, *physical* such as fatigue, poor posture and tension in the neck or shoulders, *dietary* such as specific food-stuffs e.g. citric fruits, cheese, chocolate, alcohol, caffeine and dehydration, *environmental*, smoking, loud noises or bright lights and *medicinal*, most commonly hormone-changing medications such as the oral contraceptive pill and HRT.



Types of migraine

There are many different types of migraine but they are classified into two groups: migraine without aura (includes the 'common migraine') and migraine with aura (includes the 'classic migraine').

Symptoms of migraine without aura include throbbing pain at the front or on one side of the head plus nausea, vomiting and sometimes diarrhoea and sensitivity to light and noise. The headache is usually made worse by physical activity. Attacks typically last between four and 72 hours.

In the case of migraine with aura, the above symptoms are accompanied by visual disturbances, i.e. the aura, consisting of flashing lights, zig-zag lines and/or blind spots. These disturbances may also distort figures and shapes and so interfere with reading or driving. Some sufferers of migraine with aura also experience other neurological symptoms such as tingling or pins-and-needles in one arm or leg (paresthesias).

There can also be personality changes, elation or increases in energy or hunger. These symptoms are referred to as 'prodromes' of migraine and can precede a headache by hours or even days.

How can migraine be treated?

Most migraine sufferers identify what triggers the onset of their migraines and avoid them. There is no known cure for migraine, however there are several different treatment options available to sufferers.

Your GP may prescribe simple painkillers or triptan medications. Anti-inflammatory and anti-sickness medications may also be prescribed and some sufferers benefit from pain clinics and physical therapies. Sufferers may find a combination of treatments to be most effective.

Research has shown that Chiropractic spinal manipulation is effective for reducing the frequency and severity of migraine headaches [Nelson et al (1998). The efficacy of spinal manipulation, amitriptyline and the combination of both therapies for the prophylaxis of migraine headaches. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 21:511-519].

For more information about migraine, visit:
<http://www.migrainetrust.org/>

Speak to your Chiropractor to find out how Chiropractic care may be able help with your migraines.

Chiropractic Safe and Effective

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