

# MIGRAINES

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## SYMPTOMS OR BEHAVIORS

- Severe throbbing headaches
- Visual auras consisting of zigzag lines, flashes of light, spots of bright lights, or blind spots
- Nausea
- Abdominal discomfort
- Vomiting

## ABOUT THE DISORDER

A migraine headache is a severe, unilateral or bilateral, throbbing headache that peaks within a short time after it begins. A migraine begins when, for some reason, blood vessels in the brain get smaller or constrict. When that happens, the amount of blood and oxygen flowing to the brain drops, causing the brain to send a message asking for more blood that causes other blood vessels to expand, or dilate. When those blood vessels expand, they become inflamed, throb, and cause a pounding pain.

Some scientists believe that people who get migraines have inherited a more sensitive nervous system that reacts to sudden changes in either the body or the environment. The nervous system reacts when something triggers it. The trigger starts a migraine attack. Some common triggers are:

- stress
- menstruation
- skipping meals
- too much caffeine
- certain foods (cheese, pizza, chocolate, ice cream, fatty or fried food, lunch meats, hot dogs, yogurt, or anything with MSG, a seasoning used in Asian foods)
- Too much or too little sleep
- weather changes
- travel
- excessive use of medications to treat headaches

Some people will experience an aura before the actual headache. These auras consist primarily of visual symptoms, including the presence of zigzag lines, flashes of light, spots of bright light, or blind spots (visual field defects). Other symptoms include nausea, abdominal discomfort, and vomiting (which can sometimes relieve the headache). Moderate to severe sensitivity to light and sound can also occur with the migraines. There is also the possibility of transient neurological symptoms such as uncomfortable sensations in the limbs, paralysis or sudden loss of consciousness.

Up to 10% of children between the ages of 5 and 15 have migraines. As children increase in age, more girls than boys develop these headaches.

Treatment can include both relief of the symptoms and the prevention of future headaches. Young children can be treated with acetaminophen or ibuprofen. In addition to medication, behavioral therapy and stress management techniques have proven helpful. Learning to identify and avoid triggers and learning simple biofeedback techniques have also alleviated symptoms.



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## EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Children with migraines may be frequently absent from school which can impact their academic performance. They may also have difficulty concentrating and attending in class due to discomfort. There are also indications that migraine headaches can produce cognitive impairment during the acute headache phase and over a period of time result in long-lasting visual-motor and speech-language difficulties. Up to 40% of persons with migraines have been associated with a clinical depression that may impair learning.

## INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES AND CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATIONS

- Work with your school nurse to develop a health plan for treatment which may include medication management and providing a dark quiet place to rest.
- Assist the student in tracking missing assignments due to frequent absences.
- Working with the student, family and educational team to alleviate school stressors that may be serving as triggers for the headaches.
- Provide the student with support and reassurance during migraine episodes.
- Assignments may need to be modified and adapted to allow a student to progress through the curricula during a period of frequent migraine episodes and absences.

## RESOURCES

### Kids Health For Kids

[http://kidshealth.org/kid/ill\\_injure/aches/migraines.html](http://kidshealth.org/kid/ill_injure/aches/migraines.html)

*Great website for a description of migraines, treatments, etc. geared for children.*

### 50 Ways to Control Migraines: Proven Relief for Adult, Adolescent and Child Migraine Sufferers.

by Ceabert J. Griffith

ISBN: 0-658-02157-5

2002 Contemporary Books – A Division of McGraw-Hill Companies

### MAGNUM

Washington, D.C.

(703) 739-9384

<http://www.migraines.org/>

*A support website for those that suffer from migraines.*