

Handout 9

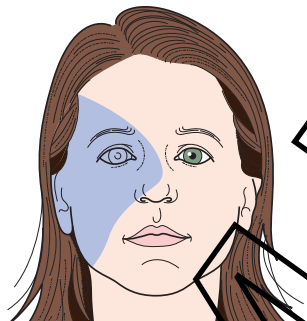
Chronic Pain Relief

What is a migraine and how is it treated?

The two most common headaches are migraine and tension-type headache. Migraine is an intermittent, disabling headache, with a throbbing or pounding pain often affecting one side of the head. Most migraine sufferers would prefer to go to a dark, quiet room during an attack and often feel nauseous. Some people see coloured lights, zig-zag lines, or blind spots with their migraine. Tension-type headache is a milder, pressure pain affecting both sides of the head. During a tension-type headache, people can usually continue with their regular daily activities.

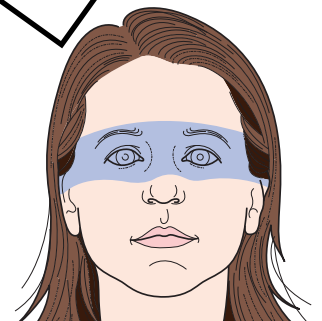
Migraine

- One-sided pain.
- Throbbing.
- Need to reduce activity.
- Sensitive to noise, lights, smells.
- Nausea or vomit.



Tension-type

- Pain on both sides of head.
- Pressure pain.
- Able to continue activities.
- No increased sensitivity.
- Minimal nausea.



Migraines usually run in families. Researchers believe that migraine sufferers inherit a slight imbalance in brain pain chemicals, including serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine. These same chemicals are important for many other body functions, like mood and normal blood pressure, so medications for problems with mood, seizures, and blood pressure often reduce migraine.

Migraine treatment is divided into acute and preventive therapies. Acute treatments relieve a specific migraine episode, and should only be regularly used about 2 days per week. People with migraines more than 2 days weekly often use prevention therapy.

Acute and preventive therapies for migraine

Acute treatments

Medications

- Analgesics
- Dihydroergotamine
- Triptans

Nonmedication therapies

- Relaxation
- Exercise

Preventive treatments

Medications

- Antidepressants
- Antiepileptics
- Antihypertensives

Vitamins and supplements

- Feverfew
- Butterbur
- Magnesium

- Coenzyme Q10
- Riboflavin
- Peppermint oil

Nonmedication therapies

- Relaxation
- Biofeedback
- Stress management
- Exercise
- Diet restrictions

More information about migraine can be found on the Internet:

www.dawnmarcusmd.com

www.achenet.org

www.headaches.org

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Chronic Pain Relief

Flare management

Even if you are consistently practising your exercises and pain management techniques, you will probably experience times of increased pain or pain flares. If the increased pain has the same characteristics as your typical pain, flare management techniques are often helpful. If you develop a new pain, see your doctor.

Flare management techniques are used when chronic pain increases to help minimize pain. Several techniques may be used together.

Flare management techniques

- Apply heat or ice (whichever you find more soothing) to the painful area for 20 minutes
- Begin relaxation techniques: deep breathing, imagery, or biofeedback
- Perform stretching exercises that stretch your painful area. Be sure to stretch slowly, and only to the point of first feeling a stretching sensation
- Do oscillatory movements: small, rhythmic, side-to-side movements of the painful area. For example, for neck pain, turn the head through about 25% of its full range of motion. Start with your head facing forward and first turn your head away from the painful side and back. Repeat at a rate of about 1 per second, for a total of 30 seconds. Rest for 30 seconds; then repeat until no further relief is noted. Then switch to turning the head toward the painful side, and proceed as above. Your therapist can describe oscillatory movements for your painful area
- Trigger-point compression: you may notice certain spots on your muscles that aggravate your pain when you press them. These are called trigger points. If you identify trigger points, apply pressure to them with your fingers and hold for 12–60 seconds. Release the pressure, and proceed with your usual stretching exercises