



You came to the emergency department with a headache. The doctor examined you and thinks it is a migraine. There were no signs of a more serious cause today. This sheet explains how to manage migraine and prevent attacks.

What is it?

Migraine is a common type of headache that comes in attacks. The pain is often throbbing, on one side, and can last from a few hours to 3 days. You may feel sick, vomit, or dislike light and noise. Some people first see flashing lights or zigzag lines (an aura). Triggers can include poor sleep, stress, missed meals, dehydration, some foods and periods.

Looking after yourself at home

- At the start of an attack, rest in a quiet, dark room.
- Drink water and eat something light if you can.
- A cool cloth on your forehead or neck may help.
- Keep a headache diary to find your triggers: sleep, food, stress, periods and screen time.
- Keep regular sleep and meal times, and drink enough water each day.
- Do not drive if you have an aura or feel drowsy from medicine.

Medicines

- Take paracetamol or ibuprofen early in the attack, unless your doctor told you not to. Follow the packet instructions.
- Avoid ibuprofen if you have a stomach ulcer, kidney disease, some asthma, or are pregnant.
- If you were given a migraine medicine or anti-sickness medicine, take it as directed.
- Taking painkillers on more than a few days each week can cause more headaches. Talk to your doctor if this happens.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre if migraines are frequent or stop you from daily life.
- Ask about medicines to prevent attacks if you have several a month.
- See them if your headaches change in pattern or you are over 50 with new headaches.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- A sudden, severe headache that reaches its worst within a minute, like being hit
- Weakness, numbness, a drooping face, or trouble speaking that is new or not your usual aura
- Fever with a stiff neck, or a rash that does not fade when pressed
- Confusion, drowsiness, or a fit (seizure)
- A headache after a head injury
- Loss of vision, or a painful red eye



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.
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