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# The Many Treatment Options for Migraines Examined

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# The Many Treatment Options for Migraines Examined

## Acupuncture Treatment For Migraine

For most people in the west, the entire concept of willingly sticking needles into your body is a bit suspect. In fact, most people probably have to reach a certain point of no return to even consider the very idea of acupuncture. Unfortunately, most migraine sufferers will no doubt reach that point of return at some point. Migraine headache pain can be unbearable to the point of excruciating and almost anyone who has ever suffered more than one migraine has reached a level of pain at which they would welcome a little pinprick if it meant a cessation of their migraine agony.

But does acupuncture actually relieve migraine symptoms? Although several studies have concluded that acupuncture is an effective migraine prevention strategy, nothing conclusive has yet been determined, though much research is available to suggest that it is effective for managing mild to moderate migraine attacks.

How acupuncture treatment typically works is by inserting fine needles specific points on the body, which are then gently manipulated with the needles. This supposedly increases blood flow in the tissues. This blood flow is called the axon reflex. It works by dilating the blood vessels around the needle area, allowing for an increase circulation where blood flow had previously been poor. This process is called stagnation and is considered to be a very good response for most chronic conditions for which one would seek acupuncture treatment, including migraine prevention.

This is not the only method of using acupuncture to treat migraines, however. Because the pain experienced during a migraine is associated with the dilation of cranial blood vessels, prompting the reaction described above by inserting needles into the head and neck might not be the best thing to do during a migraine episode. In fact, it could worsen the pain and bring on nausea. For that reason, some acupuncture practitioners try to reduce the amount of movement in the blood vessels in the head and neck during a migraine attack by restricting the acupuncture points to those on the arms and legs. To avoid unnecessary dilation of the cranial vessels, therefore, the head and neck areas are rarely stimulated.

In addition, rather than treating the patient in a prone position as would normally be done, this method of treatment is usually done with the patient sitting up because the blood vessels are can be better controlled when in a sitting position. This greatly reduces the possibility of undesired dilation of the blood vessels following acupuncture. Under some circumstances, a high frequency electrical current is sometimes connected to the acupuncture needles in order to help with constricting of vessels.

Of course, like most other treatments for migraine pain, acupuncture doesn't come without its own side effects. Unfortunately, when it comes to acupuncture, it's less a question of side effects and more a question of side injuries. Unlike the most common side effects of

medication—nausea, vomiting, swelling, hives—when acupuncture goes bad it can be life threatening. The most common serious injury associated with acupuncture involves the accidental puncture of the lung, which often results in a partial collapse of the lung.

In addition, one should also be aware of the dangers of infection. The most common infection associated with acupuncture treatments is viral hepatitis, which can potentially develop into a serious infection of the liver. Other possible side effects include bacterial infections developing locally at the site of needle insertion in the skin and elsewhere in the body. Generally, side effects seem to relate to poor hygiene and training of the acupuncturist so make sure you see some qualifications of your acupuncturist and get some recommendations beforehand if possible.

Throwing a money wrench into the whole idea, unfortunately, was a report sponsored by the Journal of the American Medical Association that claimed to find no available evidenced supporting the contention that acupuncture possesses any effectiveness in treating migraines. Until other studies conclusively reach the same opinion, however, the decision on whether to seek treatment by sticking needles into your body remains between you and your pain threshold.

## **Biofeedback and Migraines**

One method of alternative treatment for migraines that is increasing in popularity is biofeedback.

Biofeedback is basically a way for a person to learn control over body a function. Functions that include muscle tension and even levels of hormones in the blood have a direct influence upon headaches. By using biofeedback techniques, information concerning these functions are supplied to the person undergoing the technique.

A biofeedback session begins with a technician attaching your body via wires to a computer that will monitor such things as heart rate, brain waves, pulse, muscle activities, perspiration and skin temperature. The readings of these monitors will be presented as sounds or as video images. There are basically two goals involved in biofeedback. Making yourself more attuned with how you feel when your body is undergoing a variety of physical changes, for instance, changes in blood pressure, and secondly, teaching you how to adjust your physical responses so that you can effectively avoid problems associated with them, such as migraines.

The biofeedback sessions typically last from thirty to sixty minutes, whereas the actual number of sessions you will need depend greatly upon your condition as well as the progress you make. Regardless of how well you respond, it is best not to exceed fifteen sessions. The final step involved in biofeedback technique is fully understanding what you have learned and then effectively applying it to you lifestyle without the benefit of the biofeedback machines.

Not all biofeedback is alike. Indeed there are a variety of methods and the one you choose will be dependent upon your individual needs.

## **Electromyogram (EMG)**

An EMG uses electrodes or other types of sensors to measure muscle tension. By alerting you to muscle tension, you can learn to recognize the feeling early on and try to control the tension right away. EMG is mainly used to promote the relaxation of those muscles involved in backaches, headaches, neck pain and grinding your teeth. An EMG may be used to treat some illnesses whose symptoms tend to worsen under stress, such as asthma and ulcers.

## **Temperature biofeedback**

Sensors attached to your fingers or feet measure your skin temperature. Because your temperature often drops when you're under stress, a low reading can prompt you to begin relaxation techniques. Temperature biofeedback can help treat certain circulatory disorders, such as Reynaud's disease, or reduce the frequency of migraines.

## **Galvanic skin response training**

Sensors measure the activity of your sweat glands and the amount of perspiration on your skin, alerting you to anxiety. This information can be useful in treating emotional disorders such as phobias, anxiety and stuttering.

## **Electroencephalogram (EEG)**

An EEG monitors the activity of brain waves linked to different mental states, such as wakefulness, relaxation, calmness, light sleep and deep sleep.

Biofeedback has proven an effective method for many seeking alternative, non-traditional, non-medicated relief from migraine. There are several appealing factors at play in choosing to undergo biofeedback. For one thing, if successful, you reduce and possibly eliminate your dependence upon drugs. For those who don't respond to medication, it potentially can help your situation significantly. Once you begin biofeedback you may get the extra-added appeal of feeling as if you have genuine control over your disease. And, last but hardly least, it could seriously curtail your medical expenses.

However, like all other treatments, there are some drawbacks. For instance, if you are one of those anal-retentive types who have to know how something works instead on relying on the fact that it does work, you should know that experts aren't completely certain of the why when it comes to biofeedback. Many people who are consistently successful at using it to fend of a variety of health problems are totally ignorant of how they do it; all they can tell you is that their symptoms have subsided with the help of this technique where they didn't subside with any other.

Although biofeedback is considered to one of the safer methods of migraine treatment, it is still recommended that you discuss it with a doctor who is knowledgeable about the technique. You should also be aware that biofeedback has been known to interfere with the use of some medications, such as insulin.

## **Essential Migraine Medications**

Although there are many other alternative therapies for treating migraines, probably the first thing most of us will turn to is medication. Society today looks for quick answers found inside a pill, tablet or capsule to all our various ailments. There is certainly nothing wrong with resorting to medication, but when it comes to migraines one should be especially careful about what kind they use.

### **Aspirin**

Aspirin is the grand old standby for pain relief. It seems as though aspirin has been around forever and its reputation is getting better every day as it has become a recommended daily preventative measure against heart attacks. Here are some things to keep in mind when using aspirin to treat migraines.

- Aspirin should never be given to children under 12.
- Absorption of aspirin is much more effective and the chances for stomach problems are significantly decreased when dissolved in water.
- Aspirin can be used in combination with codeine; however be aware that codeine often causes constipation and/or dizziness.

### **Paracetamol**

- Similar to aspirin, but usually less irritating to the stomach lining.
- Is often used in combination with codeine or sedatives which often strengthens its ability to relieve pain.
- Paracetamol can cause liver damage if taken in excessive quantities.

### **Sumatriptan (Imigran)**

- Prescription drug developed specifically to act against migraine headache.
- It has been proven to be quite effective against migraine.
- Imigran is available in tablet, injection and nasal spray forms.
- Sumatriptan effects include nausea, and chest and throat tightness.
- Sumatriptan should be avoided by those suffering from heart disease, poor circulation or angina.

### **Metoclopramide (maxalon)**

- A prescription medicine used in combination with aspirin as an anti-nausea drug.
- May improve the absorption of other migraine drugs.

### **Ergotamine (Ergodryl, Cafergot, Migral)**

- Another effective prescription drug, this one was originally derived from a fungus that grows on rye.
- Unlike the other medications, this one is not a painkiller, but instead works specifically to reduce the pressure of blood vessels which causes migraine headaches.

- Is often used in combination with caffeine in order to improve its effectiveness.
  - It is available in both tablet and suppository form
  - Has been known to cause nausea.
  - Works by causing a narrowing of the arteries, which may worsen poor circulation.
  - This medication should not be used in individuals who suffer from heart angina.
- Dihydroergotamine (Dihyergot) is a similar drug that is given by injection.

### **Pizotifen (Sandomigran)**

- This is perhaps the most commonly prescribed preventative medication for migraines.
- Common side effects associated with pizotifen include sedation and weight gain.

### **Propranolol (Inderal, Deralin)**

- Originally introduced to treat high blood pressure.
- Multiple side effects ranging from insomnia, depression and weight gain to nightmares, impotence, and dizziness due to low blood pressure.
- May aggravate asthma and poor circulation, but is usually safe in heart disease and angina.
- Some people experience problems in absorbing this drug, so high doses may be required.

### **Amitriptyline (Tryptanol and other brands)**

- The medication works on headaches independently of its antidepressant action.
- Side effects include dry mouth, sedation, weight gain, occasionally blurred vision, constipation, and bladder problems.
- New antidepressants like fluoxetine (Prozac) and similar drugs are not as effective as headache preventatives.

### **Valproate (Epilim)**

- Introduced initially to treat epilepsy, it was found to act against most forms of headaches.
- Side effects include weight gain, nausea, tremor, hair loss and liver injury.

### **Feverfew**

- Not so much a medication as an herbal extract that has been found effective for treating migraine headache.
- Few side effects, but be aware that some commercial preparations of feverfew may be too weak to be active against headache.

### **Methysergide (Deseril)**

- Methysergide is related to ergotamine.
- Often causes upset stomachs and has also been known to cause muscle aches and dizziness.
- When used over long periods of time, methysergide has caused severe scarring around the kidneys, therefore it must be used strict medical supervision.

## **Feverfew and Migraines**

Many people have found a new method of relief for their migraine headache pain. After trying all the medications at their local drug store and even finding that prescription drugs won't do the trick, an ever-growing number of migraine sufferers are turning to an older remedy: Feverfew.

Feverfew is the common name for *Tanacetum parthenium*, an herb related to the chrysanthemum. It is also known as Bachelor's Button. As a medicine, its use can be traced at least as far back as the Dark Ages, and we're not just talking about the time before little pills in hard to open bottles. During the Middle Ages Feverfew was not only believed to help but also used to help treat various ailments, including fever reduction and, yes, headaches.

As with much folk remedies, especially folk remedies utilizing herbs, recent research has supported the effectiveness of using Feverfew as a migraine remedy. The scientific basis for this effectiveness lies in Feverfew's chemical makeup. Feverfew contains parthenolide, which is a substance that affects the levels of serotonin. Serotonin is a major player in the development of migraines; it's a neurotransmitter, which is a chemical by which neurons communicate with one another.

One of serotonin's functions is to modulate pain by blocking out nerve signals and enabling one to concentrate. During migraine attacks the level of serotonin is lowered, meaning that nerve signals aren't as effectively block. Many migraine medications essentially work by substituting its ingredients for the missing serotonin.

Parthenolide works against migraines by inhibiting the production of certain proteins in the body called prostaglandins. Prostaglandins contribute to inflammation, which is the actual cause of head pain brought on by migraines. Feverfew helps with reducing inflammatory reactions, and parthenolide also help by determining the amount of blood to be delivered to specific tissues.

The significance of this lies in the fact that migraine headaches are linked to the narrowing and widening of cranial blood vessels. It is the dilation of the blood vessels that produces the pressure, which causes the pounding headache that migraine sufferers must live with. Must live with at least until relief is finally found, that. Parthenolide actually works in conjunction with other active ingredients in Feverfew to regulate those serotonin levels in the brain.

Several studies have been conducted to determine whether Feverfew actually is effective in treating. Frankly, the jury is still out as the control process has been questioned, but nonetheless the evidence does point toward the product helping many people.

Unfortunately, Feverfew has been determined to be almost completely ineffective in relieving a headache that has already begun; in order for this to work you must take it in a preventative manner. As a supplement that you can take to prevent headaches, Feverfew is made from flowers that are harvested only when the plant is at its most Parthenolide-rich content.

In choosing Feverfew to treat migraines, you actually have a little bit of choice. While the majority of migraine sufferers choose to ingest Feverfew in either capsule or tablet, it is also

available other forms. Most stay away from the tea and tincture delivery method because both of these can be quite bitter.

You can also choose to go straight to the source and chew the leaves, but many people discover this method irritate the mouth. The freeze-dried form of Feverfew has been the most deeply studied in regard to its migraine-preventive actions. Anecdotal evidence points to Feverfew in extracted forms not being as effective.

Feverfew has been found to be safe on the whole, though it can cause an upset stomach. In addition, if you allergic or sensitive to ragweed or chrysanthemums, you may want to stay away as it can cause reactions. Those who have any bleeding disorders or are taking blood-clotting medications should also check with a doctor before taking it.

Feverfew won't produce immediate results. Before you can adequately determine whether or not Feverfew is effective in preventing your migraines, you should take it regularly for at least a few weeks. Also, once you've begun taking Feverfew, do not suddenly stop as your headaches may recur.

## **Massage Therapy**

When it comes to migraines, a little massage never hurt. But then again, a little massage never hurt whether you suffer from migraines or not. Seriously though, massage therapy has proven quite helpful in relieving headache pain. In general, you don't want to rely solely upon massage as the method for relief from your madness, but instead use it in conjunction with other therapies as well as medication and changes in your lifestyle.

How can massage help with migraines? Migraine sufferers generally suffer from stiff, tender muscles in the back of the head, neck, and shoulders. The pressure against these points in the muscle can be the cause of severe pain, pain that is akin to migraine pain. These pressure points are known as trigger points.

By massaging the trigger points, one can effectively reduce the pain and tightness in the muscles, which decreases discomfort in some sufferers. Massage therapy is a terrific method for reducing tension in the muscles, not to mention for reducing stress. When beginning a massage program it is best to begin with one or two sessions a week for about a month and a half.

Several studies have been done to determine whether massage therapy really helps relieve migraine pain. The results of these studies have determined that massage therapy at the very least helps migraine sufferers sleep better and at best actually does manage to lessen headache pain. The following are the most helpful methods of massage therapy yet found to deal with migraine headaches.

**Reflexology:** General massage therapy based upon the pressure and massage of points not on the head, but rather the soles of the feet. Reflexology isn't so much a therapy as an art; a massage art used to relieve stress and pain throughout the body. The conceptual plan is based

on the idea of zones in the feet that correspond to all areas of the body. By manipulating these zones, therapists hope to benefit the corresponding areas throughout the rest of your body.

**Craniosacral therapy:** Simply lie back and enjoy the sensations of your massage therapist softly massaging your skull and scalp. This method soothes the nerves and lessens the waves of pain that those nerves send, which is the cause of the actual pain.

**Deep-tissue massage therapy:** A deep-tissue massage is intended to help with the improvement of circulation while reducing tension within the muscles by focusing on specific body areas thought to relieve pain and stress when manipulated. The deep tissue part of deep tissue massage is in reference to how the therapists uses deep finger pressure and deliberate stroking of the areas of the body that are suffering from muscle tension or aches.

**Neuromuscular massage:** This therapy, which is also known as trigger-point therapy, is a muscle relaxing treatment that applies moderate pressure to your body's trigger points (spots in a muscle that, when stimulated by pressure or touch, are painful). Some believe that it can reduce nerve compression and relieve pain in tense or overworked muscles.

**Acupressure:** Look again, that's accuPRESSURE, not acuPUNCTURE! Acupressure techniques are employed by applying pressure from the tips of the finger to points on your head, not sticking needles into your skull. The theory is that acupressure helps headache sufferers by calming muscle tension and enhancing blood circulation. You can actually do acupressure on yourself simply by applying moderate and constant fingertip pressure with just two fingers for five minutes tops. The best method is to use one hand on top of your head and the other to apply pressure between your eyes.

When engaging in massage therapy, be aware that even the lightest, gentlest pressure from the most qualified therapist can cause at least mild discomfort, but should the pain become unbearable immediately instruct the therapist to quit massaging. To find a qualified therapist where you live, if your town features a school of massage therapy you can check with them and they will provide you with names and certification information.

## **Migraine Advice from Sufferers Around the World**

Let's face facts, sometimes medicine doesn't work. Sometimes the top alternative treatments don't work. Sometimes crazy things that you never in a million years thought would work—work!

Mention the word migraine or the word headache in a room with more than two people and you are almost guaranteed of receiving free advice. There's an almost limitless amount of possible treatments that you may or may not want to try. Most are harmless enough that it really wouldn't hurt to go ahead and give it a shot.

So next time you've got a real brain popping migraine and nothing works maybe you should see if one of these will do the trick. It may just turn out to be the magic pill you've been looking for all your life.

One common method that seems to be circulating involves **drinking a lot of water**. Not just a few glasses, mind you, but a truly titanic amount of water. For some people, it seems the more water you try the better. Maybe this is just a case of transference. You know, your bladder starts hurting so much from expanding under the weight of that liquid that you forget all about your head hurting. Other suggestions are that the migraines are triggered by dehydration and the water fixes the problem in a jiffy.

Others swear by an alternative liquid treatment. Not water, but **Benadryl**. This probably works by making you so sleepy that you forget all about the headache. Obviously, this is not recommended if you are pregnant. Not to mention that some people suffer from a reverse reaction to Benadryl and get all hyper and probably will suffer a reverse reaction in regard to headache by making it worse. This one, as with all involving medicine, requires caution.

**Massage**, of course, is a frequently tried alternative method, but it takes time and money and usually isn't exactly convenient as far as helping out right when the headache attacks. But self-massage is easily done and many, many migraine sufferers turn to it without even realizing. The preferred method seems to be using the fingertips and gently rubbing the temples, the tips of the ears or the back of the head.

**Draw**. Just because you aren't exactly Van Gogh doesn't matter. Art therapy works wonders and nobody can even come close to explaining why. Maybe it's just the physical activity, maybe it's the creative drive coming to the surface and driving away all that nasty pressure taking place inside the cranial vessels. It's really an amazing thing to watch. People barely able to keep their eyes open have been known to pick up a pen or piece of charcoal and begin applying it to paper and within a half hour their migraine headache symptoms begin to subside. Oddly enough, this therapy has proven more effective in those who claim to have no artistic talent than those who do; actual artists actually seem to be affected the least.

**Play a video game**. This is probably not the best idea for those whose migraines tend to be triggered by light or noise. If your trigger doesn't seem related to sensitivity to light or noise, then give this a try. It seems to work best if you play a game that doesn't require a significant amount of strategy; either shoot to kill or sports-related games tend to have the best results.

It is assumed that **sports games** work through their ability to a migraine sufferer focused on the outcome of actually winning a game that can be won in the time it takes have a migraine. By focusing on the game and having a goal that can be met, the stress that is related to migraines seems to be eased.

And finally, for the minority of migraines sufferers who are male, there is one last suggestion. Of course, there are disadvantages to this approach in that you need the assistance of a willing participant, but those who try it swear by it. (And when you find out what it is, you'll understand why). Apparently, being on the receiving end of a certain type of sexual practice associated with France has been known to relieve more than just a few migraines. And even if it doesn't, well, this one is definitely worth giving the old college try.

## **Prescription Medication and Migraine Relief**

New therapies to treat headache go back to the beginning of the last century when ergotamine tartrate was first isolated in a laboratory. It was this development, which introduced clinical practice into treating migraines. Ergotamine works by constricting blood vessels in the head. About twenty-five years later researchers began to suspect that disturbances in the brain's serotonin level played a role in migraine.

The drug, methysergide, a serotonin antagonist that prevents migraine attacks, was introduced into clinical practice in 1958. In recent years, new technologies have made it possible for researchers to identify serotonin receptors throughout the body. It is now believed that serotonin levels actually decrease at the onset of a migraine attack, causing blood vessels to dilate and surrounding tissues to swell. This is that brings on the pain.

Studies show that stimulating certain subtypes of serotonin receptors constrict blood vessels in the head, thereby eliminating an acute migraine attack. Ergotamine and DHE can also cause nausea and vomiting because they stimulate dopamine receptors. This research has led to the development of the new triton drugs that switch on appropriate serotonin receptors, providing effective migraine relief without many of the side effects of earlier drugs.

Examples of medications currently on the market used to prevent migraines include: propranolol (brand name: Inderal), timolol (brand name: Blocadren), divalproex (brand name: Depakote) and some antidepressants.

Symptomatic relief medications are used, as their description suggests, in the relief of the actual symptoms that are most commonly associated with migraines. These include head pain, nausea and vomiting

Abortive medications are used at the first sign of a migraine in an attempt to halt the process that causes the headache pain. Abortive medications work by constricting the blood vessels, bringing them back to normal and relieving the throbbing pain.

Preventive (prophylactic) medications are prescribed for severe headaches that occur more than twice a month, and that significantly interfere with daily activities. Preventive medications are intended to reduce both the frequency and the severity of the headache and are usually taken daily. A medicine called ergotamine (Ergostat) has been effective both when used by itself and when used in combination with other medicines. Dihydroergotamine (Migranal, D.H.E. 45) is related to ergotamine and has also found to be effective.

Other prescription medicines for migraines include:

- sumatriptan (brand name: Imitrex)
- zolmitriptan (brand name: Zomig)
- naratriptan (brand name: Amerge)
- rizatriptan (brand name: Maxalt)
- almotriptan (brand name: Axert)
- eletriptan (brand name: Relpax)
- frovatriptan (brand name: Frova)

If after taking any of these medications you still suffer migraine pain, then an even stronger medicine may be recommended. These ultrastrength migraine medications include a narcotic (brand name: Stadol nasal spray) and medicines that contain a barbiturate. Before moving on to this hard stuff, however, be aware that these medications are often habit-forming and should be used with extreme caution and only as absolutely needed. As with any medication, it is important to carefully follow the label instructions and your physician's advice.

The effectiveness of migraine treatment depends on a variety of factor. It's very important to determine what your migraine trigger is. How successful you are in avoiding your, how proactive you are in administering your treatment, the patient is in using treatments such as relaxation or drugs and how well the patient responds to treatment.

The seven triptans include sumatriptan (Imitrex), zolmitriptan (Zomig), and naratriptan (Amerge). Unlike traditional migraine medications, which help the body tolerate headache pain, triptans help manage the source of migraine pain by reducing "swelling" of the blood vessels in the brain and reducing inflammation, thus helping alleviate migraine pain.

Triptans are not recommended, however, for ocular migraines, because the constricting affect they have on blood vessels could cause problems in the retinal vessels, resulting in vision loss. The best treatment for ocular migraine, says Dr. Mays, is prevention—avoiding triggers, minimizing stress, maintaining a consistent schedule and getting enough sleep.

Treating migraines with prescriptive medication can be very effective, but don't count on it. Many do find relief through the newer medications on the market, but there are plenty who suffer through the trial period without any gain in the end. You may have to try out several medications before you come across the one that finally ends your misery.

## **Relaxation Techniques**

Stress is a common trigger for migraines. One method for relieving stress is relaxation. Easier said than done, right? When it comes to migraines, simply relaxing in a recliner isn't enough. You need to think extreme relaxation.

There are three major types of relaxation techniques:

**Autogenic training.** Utilizes visual imaging and bodily awareness to advance the patient into a state of deep relaxation. The patient imagines a tranquil location, then begins focusing physical sensations that gradually move upward from the feet toward the head.

**Progressive muscle relaxation.** Involves the slow tensing up and then releasing of each muscle group individually, beginning with the muscles in the toes and finishing with the head.

**Meditation.** Uses either Transcendental Meditation involving the repetition of a mantra, mindfulness meditation in which patients focus their attention on their momentary thoughts and sensations.

Research has shown that in many cases meditation improves one's quality of life, while reducing stress. Studies also reveal that relaxation techniques assist in the reduction of the perception of pain. One study using patients undergoing colorectal surgery concluded that patients who listened to guided-imagery tapes before, during, and after the operation had less pain and needed fewer pain medications than those who did not.

Meditation is also used extensively in treating post-traumatic stress disorder. In addition, relaxation techniques have been found useful in strengthening coping skills in migraine sufferers.

Fortunately, relaxation techniques can be done just about anywhere at any time. These techniques include:

- Deep breathing
- Active relaxation
- Stretching exercises
- Visualization
- Passive relaxation

**Deep breathing:** Simply breathe in deeply through the nose, letting your stomach expand as much as possible. It may be helpful to place your hands firmly and comfortably on your stomach during the exercise. Once you've breathed in as much as possible, hold your breath for a few seconds and then exhale slowly through your mouth. Repeat this for 3 or 4 breaths several times a day.

**Active relaxation:** First tense, then relax each muscle in the body. Start with the muscles in the head & move down to the muscles in the feet.

**Stretching exercises:** They can be done simply and easily anywhere. It's a wonderful way to loosen up tight muscles and combat stress. Muscle tension is an automatic physical response to stress and the benefit of simple stretching exercises is often overlooked as a relaxation technique.

**Visualization:** Visualization is a type of directed meditation that involves using the mind's eye to clear away mental clutter or to actually visualize how a stressful situation can be handled successfully. Picturing the stressful situation in your mind such as a business presentation or an athletic performance & then visually rehearsing the outcome does this. Visualization techniques also may be used to imagine a peaceful scene such as ocean waves lapping on the beach to create relaxation.

Meditation & self-hypnosis are passive relaxation techniques that can be used to create relaxation. Four elements are used in meditation: a quiet environment, a point of focus like a neutral word that can help with concentration, a passive, accepting attitude and a comfortable position.

Meditation once or twice a day for 10-20 minutes each time can bring rapid relief from chronic stress and also increase a person's ability to tolerate stress.

Learning ways to help yourself relax can have many benefits, perhaps the most important of which is developing a feeling of confidence about facing the everyday challenges of life, including helping to:

- Reduce unhealthy stress & anxiety
- Increase resistance to illness & disease
- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce the heart rate
- Relieve muscle tension
- Cope with medical problems, such as chronic pain or diabetes
- Prevent, manage & cope with migraine headaches
- Cope with extremely stressful or painful situations, such as childbirth.

Relaxation techniques are also considered very safe with delightful lack of side effects, although there have been very rare and unusual cases where people have actually raised their levels of anxiety rather than lowered them after using the techniques because of a heightened awareness of body sensations. Even more rare are the reports of pain, heart palpitations, muscle twitching, and crying spells.

### **The Best Resources on the Web for Migraine Patients**

You don't have to suffer migraines alone in your bed in a dark bedroom anymore. Coincident with the rise of the internet has been a rise in the number of resources available to those who are living with the wracking pain of migraine. The sheer number of sites available on the web that offer help is staggering. Trying to catalog them all would require a devote web site in and of itself. However, we've done some searching and narrowed down a quite respectable list of the best resources on the web for migraine patients.

National Headache Foundation, 428 West St. James Place, 2nd Floor, Chicago, IL 60614-2750. Call (888-NHF-5552) or (312-388-6399). (<http://www.headaches.org>)

American Headache Society (<http://www.ahsnet.org/>) and affiliated organization American Council for Headache Education (<http://www.achenet.org/>) 19 Mantua Road, Mt. Royal, NJ 08061. Call (856-423-0043)AHS Publishes the journal Headache (<http://ahsnet.org/journal/>)

MAGNUM (Migraine Awareness Group: A National Understanding for Migraineurs), 113 South Saint Asaph Street, Suite 300, Alexandria, VA 22314. Call (703-739-9384) or (<http://www.migraines.org>)

American Academy of Neurology, 1080 Montreal Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55116. Call (651-695-1940) or (<http://www.aan.com/>) Web site offers good information and provides names of neurologists for specific locations.

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, Building 31, Room 8A18, 31 Center Drive, 2540, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD 20892-2540. Call (301-496-5751) or (800-352-9424) or (<http://www.ninds.nih.gov/>)

American Medical Association information site for migraine (<http://www.ama-assn.org/special/migraine/>)

Upstate Medical University (State University of New York) has an excellent migraine Website, designed for doctors, but accessible to the patient, as well. (<http://www.upstate.edu/neurology/haas/hpmirx.htm>)

Migraine-Lane - supporting women who have migraines - A place for female migraine sufferers to find an outlet for frustrations, set-backs, and joys. Share what helps your migraines. Migraine-Lane embraces traditional and natural, holistic approaches to healing.

Migraines2Many - This is a group for people who suffer from migraines and their friends and family who feel the after-effects. This is an open forum to discuss your pain, problems, questions, treatment, and to just plain vent when you need to.

The Neurology Webforums at Massachusetts General Hospital - Active discussion board for headache sufferers. Exchange ideas, experiences, comments, questions, and answers with others who have severe headaches.

Trix's Migraine Page - Online community and resource center run by and for migraine sufferers to cry, vent, laugh and share stories of success and failure. It includes a special place for partners of sufferers.

Yahoo MigraineHelp Support Group - This group is a place for migrainers and their loved ones to know that they are not alone. Moderator Teri Roberts is an expert in the field of migraine and also a sufferer herself.

Clinical Research Uncovers Missing Links in Resolving Migraine Headaches and Chronic Pain - Article proposes that by merging craniosacral concepts of chiropractic with functional dental orthopedics, a more comprehensive system emerges which has the ability to orchestrate structural balance of the entire human frame.

Efficacy of Zomig (Zolmitriptan) Unaffected by Migraine's Relationship to Menses - Doctor's Guide article discusses a new study that shows Zomig (zolmitriptan), a product of AstraZeneca, is effective in treating migraine regardless of its relationship to menses.

FDA Approves Investigational New Drug: Application for Cannabis In Migraine Treatment - Press release on FDA approval for Ethan Russo, MD, a neurologist in Missoula, Montana, to study the effects of smoked cannabis (marijuana) as compared to oral dronabinol (Marinol) and injected sumatriptan (Imitrex) in the acute treatment of migraine.

IHS: Aspirin-Acetaminophen-Caffeine Combo More Effective Than Ibuprofen In Acute Migraine Treatment - Short article summarizing findings presented in July 2001 at the 10th Congress of the International Headache Society.

Migraine Headache Prevention -- Loma Linda University - Information on a migraine headache study compiled at Loma Linda University, California that found a strong link between migraine headaches and high fat consumption.

Photic Stimulation for Migraine Headache - The complete text and graphics of an article originally published in Headache in 1989.

American Council for Headache Education 19 Mantua Road Mt. Royal, NJ 08061 (856) 423-0258  
[www.achenet.org](http://www.achenet.org)

National Headache Foundation 428 West St. James Place Second Floor, Chicago IL 60614-2750  
(888) NHF-5552 [www.headaches.org](http://www.headaches.org)

JAMA Migraine Information Center [www.ama-assn.org/special/migraine/migraine.htm](http://www.ama-assn.org/special/migraine/migraine.htm)

The National Migraine Association

113 South Saint Asaph Street, Suite 100 Alexandria, VA 22314(703) 739-9384  
[www.migraines.org](http://www.migraines.org)

World Headache Alliance [www.w-h-a.org/world.asp](http://www.w-h-a.org/world.asp)

## **The Conventional Wisdom of Migraines**

**The Conventional Wisdom: Migraines are caused by various triggers.**

All contemporary knowledge about migraines points to chemical reactions in the brain causing blood vessels to constrict and then expand creating a sudden blood flow as the process that creates the headaches associated with migraines. Therefore the key to avoiding migraines is limiting exposure to triggers. An enormous list of triggers has been accumulated through research into migraines.

Among the most common triggers to be aware of: Stress, aroma, menstruation, sleep pattern disturbances, climate change, and diet. It's very important know triggers your migraine so you can determine whether to avoid it or not. The Conventional Wisdom: You can kiss your migraines goodbye after menopause.

The onset of migraines has been linked the start of menstruation and sixty percent of women will suffer a worsening of their coincident with their monthly periods. The link between menopause and migraines has to do with the cycling of estrogen levels; controlling estrogen levels is the best way to improve headaches in women.

Menopause does create changes in migraines, but it can hardly be concluded that they put a stop to them. Two-thirds of women with migraine will experience an improvement in their migraines after natural menopause. On the other hand, only one-third can expect an improvement hysterectomy or surgical menopause, and two-thirds will actually experience a worsening.

**The Conventional Wisdom: Quit smoking and your troubles evaporate like smoke itself.**

Nicotine modifies the quantity of pain-signaling chemicals in the nervous system. These are chemicals such as endorphins, serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine. Smokers generally are at a greater risk for headaches and this risk is related to the amount of nicotine consumed. The more nicotine a smoker takes into his system, the greater his frequency of headaches and the more severe those headaches will be. Quitting smoking helps one's overall health, with the added benefit of reducing headaches.

**The Conventional Wisdom: You are what you eat, at least as far as migraines are concerned.**

Restrictive diets are a common prescription for those suffering headaches. There are so many different foods associated with triggering migraines that each diet must be individualized. Generally speaking, however, these diets will likely include avoiding foods that contain tyramine (aged cheeses, alcohol, sour cream), phenylethylamine (chocolate), nitrates (hot dogs), and dopamine (broad beanpods). Studies evaluating single foods are mixed at best. For instance, there have been several studies into the effect of aspartame (Nutrasweet) on headaches with no conclusive evidence for either side of the issues.

Chocolate is another commonly reported headache trigger food. Several studies have been done on this link. One study tested over sixty females who were chronic migraine sufferers. The testing used chocolate bars and chocolate-flavored carob bars for control. To ensure there were no psychological effects from women who believed that chocolate caused headaches, the samples were even flavored with mint. The result showed that even those women who did believe that there is a connection between chocolate and migraines did not experience when they didn't know if they were eating chocolate or carob.

Cheating on the diet and eating other restricted foods like peanut butter, colas, or pizza along with chocolate did not result in increased headache activity either. Most studies have concluded that foods can trigger headaches, but there is a growing resistance to this idea. One reason for the misconception, these studies conclude, is that mood and behavior changes that preface a migraine attack often include food cravings, thereby creating a false association between eating the food and getting a headache. According to these scientists, it's not the food that triggers the headache.

Instead, the food craving is merely a sign that the headache process has begun. In addition, sweet craving typically occurs in response to stress, fasting, and menstruation. Again, the true trigger may be the stress, fasting or hormonal changes, with chocolate (or other craved foods) a reaction to the trigger rather than acting as a trigger itself.

If you believe foods may trigger your headache, expect to get a headache within 12 hours of eating the food item. Elimination of certain individual foods may be helpful for a minority of headache sufferers, but restricting a wide variety of foods on a long-term basis often merely increases your stress and can lead to a headache.

## **Treating Migraines in Children**

If your child has either frequent or severe headaches that is cause enough to take him to a doctor. Recurrent headaches can be a sign of something very serious in children. Be prepared when you visit the doctor: know your family's medical history, be able to give all the details concerning the headache.

If the child is old enough to answer, the doctor will probably want to specifically question the child. Don't be surprised or offended if the doctor wishes to question the child alone, he just wants to hear her describe the symptoms on her own. It's quite possible the doctor will instruct or request that you begin keeping a headache journal, which is simply a diary in which you keep track of such things as: how often the child has the headaches, how bad the headaches are, how long the headaches last, what medications were given and whether or not they helped, and anything that makes the headaches begin, get worse, or get better.

Once important information about the headaches has been gathered, the doctor may want to do a complete physical exam. After the exam is complete, often the doctor may want to conduct blood tests, cranial computed tomography, or a magnetic resonance imaging study. For migraine and tension-type headaches, treatment might begin with nothing more complicated than improving sleep and nutrition habits. Headache triggers, if they have been identified, will be recommended to be avoided.

For many kids, simple changes in lifestyle often produce a huge difference in how often they suffer from headaches, how bad the pain is and how long the headaches last. If a drug treatment thought best, doctors often first recommend acetaminophen for headaches in children. If the pain doesn't stop with this treatment, let the doctor know immediately and make sure you never give more medicine to a child than is recommended. Even though acetaminophen is available without a prescription, it can still be dangerous to a child if too much is given.

In addition, there other medications that the doctor recommend. The more information about your child's condition that you can provide to the physician, the easier it will be for the doctor to find the best medication for that child. Even with the best information, be prepared to undergo several trials before determining the most effective medication because each child reacts differently to medications. The medication may also be prescribed for the child's nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, if these symptoms are present.

Preventive treatments may be prescribed by a doctor if the child's headaches are severe or if they occur with great frequency. Many times kids and teenagers who have very bad headaches, as well as their parents make the decision not to use preventive treatments because they don't want t to have take medicine every single day. The choice in this matter must be made by each child and his parents based on how difficult it may be for the child to cope with the headaches and how well medications work if taken after the headaches start. Just be aware that there are many preventive medications that can be tried.

Some non-drug treatments, like biofeedback and relaxation therapies, can be helpful, particularly in older children. These techniques must be learned by the child who will then

practice and use them to cope with headache pain when it begins. If the techniques are practiced every day, they sometimes are even able to help prevent headaches from starting. Biofeedback machines measure electrical impulses or heat from the child's skin and show these measurements on a TV screen, a flashing light bulb, or a beeper. The feedback from their own bodies can help the child to practice relaxation and make internal adjustments that help relieve the headache pain.

Because stress and anxiety play a part in many childhood headaches, it might be helpful for some children to see a mental health specialist, like a psychologist. Mental health specialists can help children with the relaxation techniques described above, and also help them deal with the stress and anxiety they are feeling.

### **Treating Migraines With Homeopathy**

Treating migraine through homeopathy is becoming a very popular alternative to medicine-based treatments. Homeopathy is basically a method or theory of healing that attempts to stimulate the body into healing itself by using natural remedies. The following are the power list of best remedies for treating your migraine homeopathically.

**Belladonna** — Extracted from nightshade, this one is great reducing fever as well as treating those sudden throbbing headaches that tend to worsen with motion and light, but are partially relieved by pressure, standing, sitting, or leaning backwards.

**Bryonia** — for headaches with a steady, sharp pain in the forehead that may radiate to the back of the head; these types of headaches worsen with movement and light touch, but improve with firm pressure; this remedy is most appropriate for individuals who are irritable and may also experience nausea, vomiting, and constipation

**Gelsemium** — for pain that extends around the head and feels like a tight band of constriction; pain usually originates in the back of the head and may be relieved following urination; this remedy is most appropriate for individuals who feel extremely weak and have difficulty keeping their eyes open.

**Ignatia** — for pain that may be described as a feeling of something being driven into the skull; these types of headaches tend to be triggered by emotion, including grief or anxiety, and the treatment is appropriate for both children and adults.

**Iris versicolor** — for periodic migraines that begin with blurred vision, especially after eating sweets; pain usually occurs on one side of the head and may be partially relieved by gentle movement and/or fresh air

**Kali bichromicum** — for aching and pressing pains on the forehead (particularly between and behind the eyes); may be accompanied by sinus congestion or nausea and vomiting; this remedy is most appropriate for individuals who prefer to lie down in a dark room and who experience relief from warmth and eating.

**Lachesis** — Get its bite by being extracted from the poison of the Bushmaster snake. Best for migraines on the left side of the head that are typically worse in the mornings and before menstruation; this type of headache is aggravated by warmth and sunlight and relieved by open air and firm pressure.

**Natrum muriaticum** — one of the most common remedies used for migraine headaches, particularly those that are described as "hammers beating the head;" pain is relieved when the individual is lying down, alone, in a quiet dark room; these migraines may be associated with either menstruation or a grieving experience and are worse in the middle of the day; this remedy is most appropriate for children who look pale and feel nauseated, nervous, and emotional.

**Nux vomica** — for headaches that are described as a "nail being driving into the head;" often accompanied by nausea and/or dizziness; this remedy is most appropriate for individuals who are constipated and irritable.

**Sanguinaria** — for right-sided headaches that begin in the neck and move upwards, recur in a predictable pattern (such as every seven days), and are accompanied by nausea and vomiting; pain is aggravated by motion, light or sun exposure, odors, and noise; this remedy is appropriate for children who may have a craving for spicy or acidic foods, despite having a general aversion to eating due to the headache.

**Sepia** — for migraines that are accompanied by nausea and are relieved when the individual is lying down; light and movement tend to worsen symptoms; this remedy is most appropriate for individuals who are moody and don't like being alone, but worry about being with others.

**Pulsatilla** — for headaches triggered by eating rich, fatty foods, particularly ice cream; pain tends to move but may be concentrated in the forehead or on one side of the head; may be accompanied by digestive problems or occur around the time of menstruation; children for whom this remedy is appropriate often develop these symptoms while at school.

**Spigelia** — for migraines described as a stinging, burning, or throbbing pain, often on the left side of the head; symptoms tend to worsen with exposure to cold weather and with motion, but are temporarily relieved by cold compresses and when the individual is lying on the right side with the head propped up.

## **Treating Migraines with Supplements**

It would be terrific to come across a magic pill that ends migraine headaches the moment they hit. But unless you marry a witch or find a genie on a beach somewhere, it ain't going to happen any time soon. For the time being, the best approach to treating migraines is with prevention. Supplements are definitely the generals leading the way on this battlefield. Okay, we all know generals don't lead the way on the battlefield anymore, but the metaphor is still apt.

**Magnesium and calcium:** Magnesium and calcium help attack migraines by keeping blood vessels malleable and helping the brain process serotonin.

Suggested dose: 400-mg magnesium and 100 mg calcium twice a day. Best taken with food to ease absorption. People with kidney disease should check with their doctor before taking magnesium.

**Feverfew:** Feverfew is rapidly becoming one of the most popular of all the natural migraine remedies on the market because of its anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving properties. Studies show that it can decrease both the frequency and severity of migraines when taken over several months.

Suggested dose: 250 mg taken every morning, either with or without food, most effective when taken for extended periods. Look for standardized preparations containing at least 0.4% parthenolide, the active ingredient.

**5-HTP** (5-hydroxytryptophan), is a form of acid tryptophan, an amino acid the body converts into serotonin. Although it may take several months to achieve the maximum benefit, some claim it is as effective as drugs. Nausea is the main side effect, but if it occurs, it usually dissipates within several days.

Suggested dose: 100 mg of 5-HTP 3 times a day. Take around mealtime. Don't combine with prescription antidepressants, such as Prozac.

**Riboflavin:** Riboflavin, or vitamin B2, is believed to help prevent migraines by nourishing the brain's energy reserves. It may be even more effective than feverfew or 5-HTP when migraines are ongoing.

Suggested dose: 400 mg every morning. Riboflavin is most effective when taken long term for relief of chronic migraines.

**Vitamin C:** Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant that may also boost the production of stress-relieving hormones. Excess stress is thought to play a role in triggering migraines.

Suggested dose: 1,000 mg 3 times a day. Take with food. Reduce dose of vitamin C if diarrhea develops.

**Pantothenic acid:** Pantothenic acid, or vitamin B5, strengthens nerves and promotes energy production. Like vitamin C, it may help the body produce stress-busting hormones. Pantothenic acid also plays a role in serotonin production. Suggested dose: 400 mg twice a day. Take pantothenic acid with meals.

**Kava:** Kava, finally, can be a very useful herb for the relief of stress and anxiety, which are thought to trigger migraine attacks in some people.

Suggested dose: 250 mg 3 times a day. Kava may be most beneficial during times of high stress. Look for standardized extracts containing at least 30% kavalactones, the active ingredients in the herb. In America, the Food & Drug Administration has issued a warning about kava's possible adverse reactions in the liver recommending that users consult a physician if any of the following is applicable:

- Severe headaches develop suddenly, particularly if they first appear after age 35.
- A headache is accompanied by fever, stiff neck, weakness on one side of the body, loss of speech, blurred vision, or disorientation.
- A headache is accompanied by inflamed, clogged sinuses.
- A severe headache develops after intense physical exertion or a blow to the head.
- Migraines become more severe or more frequent.

The following supplements and herbs may be helpful in the treatment of migraine headaches:

- Both Alpha Linolenic Acid (ALA) and Gamma Linolenic Acid reduce the severity and frequency of migraines by over 75%.
- Fish oil helps prevent migraines by reducing blood vessel spasms.
- Vitamin B2 appears to completely suppress migraine headaches.
- Vitamin B3 (Riboflavin) helps to reduce the severity and frequency of migraines.
- Vitamin D provides relief when used in conjunction with calcium.
- One interesting supplement found to help with migraine relief is capsaicin, the chemical that makes hot peppers hot. It can be applied as an ointment inside the nose, though beware of burning.

## **Using Botox and Other Medicines Designed for Other Ailments in Treating Migraine**

### **Can Botox help prevent migraines?**

Botox (botulinum toxin) is a purified protein that belongs to a class of compounds known as neurotoxins that initially approved the US Food & Drug Administration to treat eye muscle disorders known as strabismus and blepharospasm. Since then, obviously, its use has extended to other, more cosmetic uses.

Botox weakens or paralyzes (depending on dose) muscles by preventing the release of acetylcholine, a signal that the nerves need to cause muscle contraction. This is the same substance that is produced in spoiled food and causes the illness known as botulism. However, in medical use, the Botox is injected directly into the muscles involved rather than absorbed into the bloodstream, and the doses used are much less than those that cause botulism.

The jury is still out on whether Botox will ever make it into the realm of medical treatment that patients naturally turn to for migraine relief, but if you think that that Botox is the only treatment found to help with migraine that was originally created for treatment for another ailment, take a look at this list. Everything on it has been used in migraine relief and everything on it was originally designed for use against something else.

### **Anihypertensives (blood pressure meds)**

#### **Alpha-2 agonists:**

- Clonidine, aka Catapres
- Guanfacine, aka Tenex

**ACE Inhibitors:**

Benazepril, aka Lotensin  
Captopril, aka Capoten  
Enalapril, aka Vasotec  
Fosinopril, aka Monopril  
Lisinopril, aka Zestril, Prinivil  
Moexipril, aka Univasc  
Perindopril, aka Aceon  
Quinapril, aka Accupril  
Ramipril, aka Altace  
Trandolapril, aka Mavik  
Angiotensin II Inhibitors:  
Candesartan, aka Atacand  
Eprosartan, aka Teveten  
Irbesartan, aka Avapro  
Losartan, aka Cozaar  
Olmesartan, aka Benicar  
Telmisartan, aka Midcardis  
Valsartan, aka Diovan

**Beta Blockers:**

Acebutolol, aka Secral  
Atenolol, aka Tenormin  
Betaxolol, aka Kerlone  
Bisoprolol, aka Zebeta, Emconcor  
Cartelol, aka Cartrol  
Labetalol, aka Normodyne, Trandate  
Metoprolol, aka Lopressor  
Nadolol, aka Corgard  
Penbutolol aka Levatol  
Pindolol, aka Visken, Syn-Pindolol  
Propranolol, aka Inderal  
Timolol, aka Blocadren

**Calcium Channel Blockers:**

Amlodipine, aka Norvasc  
Bepridil, aka Vascor  
Diltiazem, aka Cardizem, Tiazac  
Felodipine, aka Plendil  
Flunarizine, aka Sibelium (Canada)  
Isradipine, aka DynaCirc  
Nicardipine, aka Cardene  
Nifedipine, aka Adalat, Procardia  
Nimodipine, aka Nimotop  
Nisoldipine, aka Sular  
Verapamil, aka Calan, Verelan, Isoptin

**Other Antihypertensives:**

Guanfacine, aka Tenex  
Mirtazapine, aka Remeron

**Antihistamines:**

Cyproheptadine, aka Periactin  
Pizotifen, aka Sandomigran (UK)

**Antidepressants**

Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs):

Amitriptyline, aka Elavil (discontinued), Endep  
Amoxapine, aka Asendin  
Clomipramine, aka, Anafranil  
Desipramine, aka Norpramin  
Doxepin, aka Sinequan  
Imipramine, aka Norfranil, Tofranil  
Nortriptyline, aka Pamelor, Aventyl  
Protriptyline, aka Vivactil  
Trimipramine, aka Surmontil

MAOI Antidepressants:

Isocarboxazid, aka Marplan  
Phenelzine, aka Nardil  
Tranylcypromine, aka Parnate

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs):

Citalopram, aka Celexa  
Escitalopram oxalate, aka Lexapro  
Fluoxetine, aka Prozac  
Fluvoxamine, aka Luvox  
Paroxetine, aka Paxil  
Sertraline, aka Zoloft

Selective serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SSNRIs):

Duloxetine hydrochloride, aka Cymbalta

Other Antidepressants:

Bupropion, aka Wellbutrin, Zyban  
Mirtazapine, aka Remeron  
Trazodone, aka Desyrel  
Venlafaxine, aka Effexor, Effexor XR

**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Meds Selective Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitor:**

Atomoxetine HCl, aka Strattera

## **Arthritis**

### MEDSCox-2 Enzyme Inhibitors:

Celecoxib, aka Celebrex

### **Neuronal Stabilizing Agents (antiseizure meds)**

Carbamazepine, aka Tegretol  
Clonazepam, Klonopin  
Clorazepate, aka Tranxene  
Divalproex, aka Depakote  
Gabapentin, aka Neurontin  
Levetiracetam, Keppra  
Lamotrigine, aka Lamictal  
Oxcarbazepine, Trileptal  
Tiagabine, aka Gabitril  
Topiramate, aka Topamax  
Valproate Sodium, aka Depacon  
Zonisamide, aka Zonegran

### **Ergot Alkaloid:**

Methylergonovine, aka Methergine (the only ergot used as a preventive)

### **Leukotriene Blockers:**

Montelukast, aka Singulair  
Zafirlukast, aka Accolate  
Zileuton, aka Zyflo

### **Other:**

Baclofen, aka Lioresal  
Botulinum Toxin Type A, aka Botox

### **Dietary Supplements:**

Coenzyme Q10  
Feverfew  
Butterbur, aka Petadolex  
Magnesium  
Vitamin B2  
5-HTP (Check carefully with doctor because of interactions with meds including triptans)  
Lecithin

## **10 Ways to Instantly Relieve Migraines**

When a migraine headache hits, all you really care about is relief. Nothing else matters, every other concern in the world takes a back seat to getting rid of the pain. If it's severe enough—and migraines pain can get pretty severe—you won't even care what it takes to get that relief. Not step is too outrageous; too off the wall.

Instant relief for migraines may be accomplished with over the counter medication such as ibuprofen or migraine-strength aspirin. But one man's instant is another man's intolerable wait. There are certain steps you can take that have proven effective in instantly relieving migraine pain in other sufferers. Most, if not all, probably won't work for you, but you just may get lucky enough to stumble across one that does the trick.

1) One of the causes of migraines is the rush of blood to the head, so constricting the blood vessels to slow down that rush can often lead to relief. As anyone who remembers elementary science class knows, heat expands and cold contracts. Therefore, applying cold compresses to the forehead and/or back of the neck is a good starting point.

2) In keeping with the same concept as the above, try dipping your fingertips into ice cold water and massaging your temples and neck. This method combines the attempt to constrict blood vessels with the soothing relief of a massage, and is much better for those people who just can't stand to have a wet cloth weighing down on their forehead.

3) Some migraines are triggered by stress, in particular the building up of anger. Believe it or not, but one method of relieving the pain very quickly is simply to watch something funny. Don't make the mistake of going to a movie or a comedy club, however. The key here is relaxation. Find a place where you can relax by yourself and cool down while laughing.

4) Aerobic exercise is another terrific method of instantly relieving pain. In addition to taking your mind off the pain, the exercise gets the blood flowing throughout the body, helping to constrict

5) Maybe the most enjoyable method of attaining relief quickly—and if you choose this method you may not necessarily want to think of terms of quick release—is by engaging in sexual activity. Some research has concluded that migraines are especially difficult to get rid of because the pain is so intense that sufferers can't think of anything else. Sex is a great way to get your mind off your suffering. Indeed, instead of a headache as an excuse not to have sex, think of a migraine as the perfect excuse to have sex.

6) Turn out the lights, pull shades and close the curtains. Turn off and otherwise eliminate all noise. Lay down comfortably, whether that means flat on your back with no pillow or on your side with two pillows. Simply relaxing in a dark, quiet room is often enough to quickly alleviate your pain.

7) Intake caffeine. While caffeine can trigger a migraine, it can also be used to relieve it. Generally speaking, caffeine as a relief method works best for those whose migraines are, indeed, not caused by caffeine. Keep a journal to determine what seems to be causing your headaches and if you're sure that it isn't caffeine, then at the first sign of a headache, try drinking coffee, tea or a soda high in caffeine.

8) Take a course in biofeedback and engage in this highly recommended manner of migraine management.

9) Move to a different environment. Smells, noise and even colors may have triggered your headache. You may actually be able to get rid of the pain simply by moving away from the trigger.

10) This one is pretty radical and may not even be considered by many of you, but if your head is pounding hard enough and you reach the point where you are willing to try anything, then this is the method for you. Often, migraines are caused a buildup of toxicity in the digestive tract. One way to clear that out and get rid of the headache is with a cool water enema.

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