



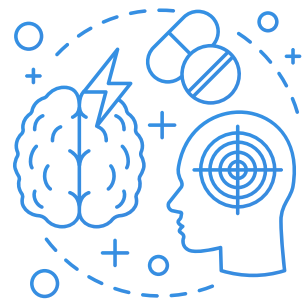
Migraines

A complex disease with many variables and is different for everyone.

Causes

Migraine headaches may be caused by:

- Changes in the brainstem and its interactions with the brain's pain pathway
- Imbalances in brain chemicals
- Environmental triggers such as allergens and airborne chemicals
- Food triggers
- Biological factors such as hormone levels

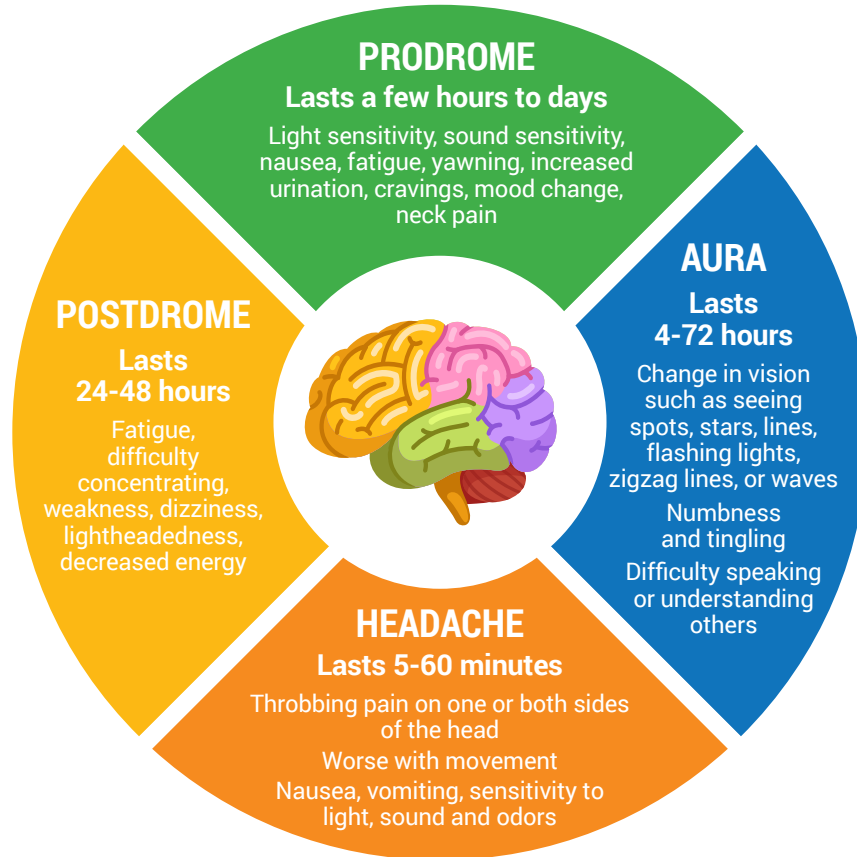


Did you know migraine headaches run in families?

If one or both of your parents have them, there's a 50-75 percent chance you will too.

Four stages of a migraine attack

Understanding the stages of a migraine attack can help you manage symptoms and develop a treatment plan with your doctor.



Diagnosis

If your primary care physician suspects you have migraines, you may be referred to a headache specialist or neurologist who will review your medical history, symptoms, and perform a physical and neurological examination. The doctor may also recommend some tests to rule out other possible causes for your pain.

Blood tests	Test for blood vessel problems, infections in your spinal cord or brain, and toxins in your system.
Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)	Diagnose tumors, strokes, bleeding in the brain, infections, and other brain/nervous system conditions.
Computerized tomography (CT) scan	Diagnose tumors, infections, brain damage, and bleeding in the brain.
Spinal tap (lumbar puncture)	To rule out infections, bleeding in the brain or another underlying condition.

When to See Your Doctor

If you're not familiar with the facts about migraine headaches, you might not even realize you're having one. If you experience symptoms included in the Four Stages chart, you should see your primary care physician. He or she may order tests to rule out other potentially serious medical conditions.



Preparing for your appointment

Because appointments can be brief and there's often a lot to discuss, it is important to prepare for your appointment.

Before your doctor visit:

- Write down symptoms you're experiencing
- Bring a list of any significant stresses or recent life changes
- Make a list of all medications, vitamins or supplements that you're taking
- Write down questions to ask your doctor
- Ask a family member or friend to join you. They can help you remember essential questions to ask the doctor.

Watch this video to prepare for your visit:



Treatment

Don't let migraine pain control your life.

There is no cure for migraines. However, migraine medications can help stop symptoms and prevent future attacks. Medications for migraines fall into two categories: **pain-relieving medications** taken during migraine attacks and are designed to stop symptoms and **preventative medications** taken daily to reduce the severity or frequency of migraines. Learn more about migraine [diagnosis and treatment](#) options.

The FDA recently approved three new preventive migraine treatments that effectively reduced headache frequency with few side effects during clinical trials. These are the first drugs specifically approved for migraine prevention in more than 50 years. Your treatment strategy depends on the frequency and severity of your headaches, the degree of disability your headaches cause and your other medical conditions. Your doctor can help find the right medication for you.

Sources: American Migraine Foundation, MayoClinic.org, US Food & Drug Administration (FDA)