

Headache or Migraine? [1]

Migraine is a disorder characterized by repeated attacks of severe headache. A migraine headache causes throbbing or pulsating pain, usually on only one side of the head. These headaches are often associated with nausea, vomiting, and extreme sensitivity to light and sound; they generally last between four hours and three days. Migraine headaches, which are often misdiagnosed as sinus or tension headaches, are severe enough to interfere with sleep, work, and other everyday activities. They may occur as often as several times per week or as rarely as once or twice a year.

About 30 million Americans suffer from migraine. It is most common among people age 25 to 55, though it can affect children and teens as well. Migraine is about three times more prevalent in women than men; roughly one in five women and one in 16 men suffer from migraine.

Types of Migraine

Common Migraine

Also called a migraine without aura, common migraine is the most prevalent type of migraine, and it accounts for about 80 percent of patients. Auras are not associated with headaches in this type of migraine. Fatigue, mood changes, anxiety, and mental fuzziness are among the symptoms frequently experienced.

Classic Migraine

Also called migraine with aura, classic migraine occurs in about one-fifth of migraine sufferers. Visual or other sensory symptoms called auras most often occur before a headache but can also appear during or after a headache. Most commonly, sufferers see auras that are flashing lights, zigzag lines, or blind spots. Auras can also include feelings of numbness or tingling, speaking difficulty, ringing in the ears, smelling a strange odor, or having an odd taste in the mouth.

Menstrual Migraine

This type of migraine is related to fluctuating levels in estrogen during a woman's menstrual cycle. Around 60 to 70 percent of female migraine sufferers report a relationship between their migraine headaches and menstruation.

Abdominal Migraine

Abdominal migraine is an episode of moderate to severe abdominal pain, nausea, or vomiting that can last up to 72 hours. It is typically seen in children, especially those with a family history of migraine. Children who suffer from abdominal migraines usually suffer from classic migraine headaches as adults.

Retinal Migraine

Also known as ocular migraine, retinal migraine involves temporary partial or total loss of vision in one eye that can last an hour or less and is not always accompanied by headache.

Familial Hemiplegic Migraine

This is a very rare inherited condition caused by one of several chromosomes. In hemiplegic migraine, one side of the body may have some temporary motor paralysis or go numb during a migraine headache.

Basilar Artery Migraine

This type of migraine presents itself as a headache, usually in the back of the head, and is associated with an aura that includes dizziness, confusion, problems speaking, hearing changes, and visual disturbances. It is usually related to hormonal changes and most often affects young adults.

Ophthalmoplegic Migraine

This is a rare type of migraine that requires emergency treatment. Patients develop a partial or complete paralysis in nerves required for eye movement.

Status Migrainosus

This is a rare condition characterized by an extremely severe headache that lasts more than 72 hours. Hospitalization is often required to relieve symptoms

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