

# MIGRAINE MANAGEMENT

## Ask Your Pharmacist

Your head is throbbing on one side. Bright lights cause intense pain. You feel nauseated and disoriented. Immediately you know what has happened; you've developed a migraine headache. About 28 million Americans suffer from migraine headaches, resulting in 150 million lost workdays and \$13 billion lost in productivity each year. Women tend to develop migraines at a greater rate than do men, and migraines may run in families, suggestive of a genetic component. Migraines usually begin between ages 10 and 30, although people of any age can experience a migraine headache.

While scientists once thought that migraines are the result of constricting and dilating blood vessels in the brain, new research suggests that abnormally sensitive brain cells may send signals in a wave toward pain receptors. This electrical wave travels from the front to the back of the brain, and eventually down the brainstem where pain receptors are located.

Many different events may trigger a migraine headache including lack of sleep, ingestion of tyramine in cheese or red wine, or changing estrogen levels in women. Allergies, sodium, smoking, or use of certain medications may trigger other migraine attacks.

Migraines are complex episodes of debilitating pain. We should approach our body's treatment in as complete a manner as possible. Essentially, migraine

management requires identification and removal of the trigger event, if such an event exists. Certain pharmaceutical drugs may be of help. Consult your doctor or our pharmacist for further information on the most suitable medication.

Natural therapies, like feverfew and magnesium, have also been shown to reduce the duration of migraine headaches. For some, the absence of proper vitamins and minerals is a possible connection. Nutritional experts suggest supplementation with B vitamins, and in particular riboflavin, or B-2. B-2 is a nutrient that helps to support our mental function, and aids in proper blood vessel contraction and dilation. In larger doses studied, the vitamin appears to reduce the severity and frequency of migraine episodes.

When taking a B vitamin, it is a good idea to consider taking a complex of B vitamins, as different vitamins help others to be used. Vitamin B-6, in particular, will help with this process and should be a part of a good formula. The mineral magnesium is also thought to help in this process, and is known to influence blood circulation and aid in reduction of excitatory vascular changes.

Herbalists have long used the herb Feverfew to support the process of dilation and episodic frequency. Clinical trials attest to the herb's influence in migraine therapy. It has been shown to help in normalizing vascular tone by decreasing the synthesis of inflammatory prostaglandins. Another favored herb in

for your best health

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# MIGRAINE MANAGEMENT (continued)

this process is the well-used Ginkgo biloba.

Aromatherapy oils have also been used to aid in the process. Blends using oils, such as Ylang-ylang and Rosemary, have been applied to the temples with relief. It is important to mix oils like this in a base oil, like almond or massage oil. There are experts in aromatherapy that may also have other blends that can help.

Baths should be considered therapeutic to sufferers of migraines. When the pressure of migraines rules the body, a bath in hot water will draw the vascular pressure to the hips,

lessening the pressure. Add the oils mentioned above to complement the action of the bath. Alternating hot and cold water packs to the neck and face can help ease the discomfort by easing the constriction of the blood flow. Also try massaging the temples in a clockwise fashion, after dipping the finger in cold water.

From a nutritional standpoint, there are foods that can create the type of inflammation that can result in migraines. Nightshade vegetables such as peppers, tomatoes, and eggplant can stimulate inflammation. Onions, garlic, animal fats, caffeine, and smoked foods can also be a problem.

While there is no good cure available for migraines, there is definite help available by using a complementary approach to the disorder. Attention to your diet, your nutritional and herbal aids, the use of hydrotherapy and mind-body approaches, can potentially reduce the frequency of the attacks and help with your current medical regimen.

For more information about complementary approaches to migraines, stop by our pharmacy today. We are happy to provide you with information that may make an

incredible difference in your quality of life.

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