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Migraine Management

Most of us have experienced headaches, even bad ones. But migraines can be severe, last for many hours and of a throbbing nature. The pain usually is felt on one side of the head and you may become very sensitive to light, noise, movement and touch. You may also feel sick and vomit.

Some sufferers get early warning signs that a migraine is on the way. You may start craving for sweet foods, yawn a lot or feel irritable and withdrawn. Around 25% of migraine sufferers get an 'aura' seeing flickering or jagged lines or lose vision. The aura can happen up to an hour before the headache and should settle as the headache starts (if it doesn't, let your Doctor know).

Women tend to get migraines more often than men due to changing hormone levels, especially around menstruation time. They get less frequent after menopause. Children can get migraines and those that do often complain of tummy ache. It is worth checking with your Doctor if your child gets lots of tummy aches and feels sick for no obvious reason.

There are many theories about what causes migraines. Certain triggers are thought to change blood flow to the brain and cause chemicals to be released that result in the migraine. Some foods like cheese, chocolate, wines, citrus fruits or caffeine are triggers for some people. Lack of sleep, missing meals or high stress levels can also bring on migraines. Keeping a diary of the events before a migraine happened will help identify triggers.

Many different migraine-relief medicines are available. They range from pain relievers to the serotonin agonists that work on the blood vessels to ease the symptoms of a migraine. These include Sumatriptan (Imigran) which, under special conditions, can be bought from the pharmacist without a prescription. Zomig Nasal Spray (Zolmitriptan) is a new product available for fast relief from migraines. Long-term medicines may also be used to reduce or prevent the number of migraine attacks.

There seems to be a link between migraines and Magnesium levels and low levels of Magnesium in the soil in Hawke's Bay seems to correlate to high levels of migraine sufferers. Unfortunately low levels in the soil mean that supplementation is usually required if migraines are recurrent or persistent. Magnesium is thought to support normal functioning of smooth muscle cells and deficiency affects the body's ability to carry oxygen in the blood and may promote contraction of the smooth muscles in the lining of blood vessels. Ask us for the best Magnesium supplement for you. There is also increasing evidence that supplementing with Coenzyme Q10 (150-160mg/day) can reduce migraine incidence significantly.

In dietary terms, migraines are often caused simply because the individual is not having a well balanced, nutritious intake. Another factor is dehydration, so sufferers need to make sure they keep a regular fluid intake and not wait until they are thirsty. Unidentified food intolerances may also contribute to migraines, so it's worth exploring if any exist. Cherries and broccoli may help keep migraines at bay.

Most migraines last only a few hours but some people have very bad attacks that last for anything up to three days. Resting or sleeping in a quiet and dark room can help. It is common for people to complain of feeling washed out after a migraine and it may take a few days to feel like yourself again.