Migraine Headaches (Teen)

A migraine headache is a type of headache that has many different forms. Eye problems, sinusitis, or allergies do not cause migraine headaches.

General information:

- There is no "cure" for migraines. The treatment is to reduce the number and severity of attacks (headaches). It also helps to identify triggers that lead to migraines and to set a normal daily routine with enough rest, activity, and balanced diet.
- Migraines are not dangerous, even if you are feeling bad from the headache or are vomiting. With no treatment, the headache will go away on its own.
- Most attacks last less than one day. Some may go on for several days.
- Tests such as CT scans, MRI, and blood tests are not needed with typical headache histories and a normal examination. If you are having other symptoms or are getting worse, your health care provider may order additional tests.

Triggers of migraine headaches:

- Getting too much or too little sleep
- Skipping meals, especially breakfast
- Having to think or physically work really hard
- Not getting enough to drink each day
- Overwork or a daily schedule so busy that there’s not enough time to rest
- A “let down” following a period of excitement, stress, or exertion
- Certain chemicals in foods such as nuts, cheese, lunch meats, and chocolate
- Changes in weather
- Common life stresses such as a new school or changes in home

Treatment plan for migraine headache management strategy should include:

- Lifestyle adjustments to prevent headaches
- How to deal with acute attacks
- How to handle acute attacks that do not respond to first line medication treatment or therapy

What to do if you have a migraine headache:

1. Try to take a nap in a quiet (possibly dark) place. Sleep will usually relieve the migraine.

2. Take over-the-counter pain relievers, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen. These may help if given early before nausea occurs. Be sure to read the package instructions for the amount to take based on your age and weight.

3. Your health care provider may prescribe medication for nausea, such as Phenergan® or Reglan®. These medications may be taken by mouth or suppository. These may help the pain medication be better absorbed, stop the nausea, and help you get to sleep.

4. Your health care provider may prescribe medication specifically for a migraine, such as Imitrex®, Amerge®, Zomig®, Maxalt®, Midrin®, or Migranol®. These medications may be taken as a tablet, nasal spray, or shot. Use as directed if the migraine does not respond to simple measures such as sleep.
General information:

- Using a headache calendar is very helpful to you and your health care provider. It lets him or her know the pattern of the headaches (how often, how severe), what medication you took, and whether or not the medication works.
- Things to note on the headache calendar include:
  - Time the headache started
  - What the headache felt like and where it hurt
  - Name of the medication you took, the time it was taken, and how much was taken
  - When the headache went away
- Be sure to bring the headache calendar with you to your doctor’s appointment. Also, have it to refer to when you talk to your health care provider over the telephone.
- For you to receive medication at school, your teachers and school nurse need to be aware of your headaches and treatment plan.
- Using too much pain reliever can trigger rebound headaches and cause preventive medications to not work. Be sure to tell your health care provider about all medications that you take, even non-prescription medication.
- Learning stress management and relaxation techniques may help with your headaches. Talk with your health care provider about these techniques.

Preventive medicine:

If your headaches happen often, or are very severe, or both, your doctor may prescribe a daily medication to prevent the headaches. All of these medications help to reduce how often you have migraine headaches and how painful they are. Talk with your health care provider about more information on these medications.

Common causes of poor headache control include:

- **Not making changes in your daily life:** Sleep, diet, activity level, exercise, stress
- **Not giving the medication a chance to work:** A medication trial can take at least 4-6 weeks.
- **The wrong dose of medication:** Your medication dose may need to be adjusted and readjusted depending on side effects and response to headaches.
- **Thinking that only taking medications will make the headaches go away:** Some lifestyle changes are needed along with taking medication as directed.
- **Stresses:**
  - Family stress (death, birth, divorce)
  - Self-image concerns
  - School stress
  - Social problems/peer pressure
- **Uncontrollable events:**
  - Weather changes
  - Holidays

Call your health care provider or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188 if:

- You are not responding to the medication as prescribed.
- You begin to get dehydrated from vomiting.
- Your headaches are becoming more painful or more frequent, or location of pain changes.
- You have questions or concerns.