

Migraine treatment options

There are various medicines that can either prevent migraine attacks or reduce the symptoms so that attacks are shorter and less severe. Some have been specially developed to treat migraine and some are mainly intended for other conditions alongside acute and preventative medications.

GON block injections

A greater occipital nerve (GON) block contains a small dose of local anaesthetic and/or steroid.



It is injected around the greater occipital nerve that travels up each side of the back of your head and can be oversensitive in people who often have headaches.

The GON block aims to help by reducing the level of pain. This can provide shortterm benefit to some people with migraine by reducing the severity and frequency of attacks.

Your doctor will usually feel around the back of your head to locate the best place for the injection, either on one side or both. The injection involves a fine needle and takes a few minutes.

Generally, GON blocks are well tolerated. You may feel dizzy for a little time afterwards. There is a small chance of bleeding or bruising at the injection site and the area around it may feel numb and tender for a few hours. Some people find their migraine feels worse for a few days after the injection. This is normal and should settle down.

Medical devices

For various personal or medical reasons many people want to use nonmedication approaches to managing their migraine.



There are medical devices approved for use in the UK that may treat or prevent migraine attacks without side effects. But these are often only available on prescription or when authorised by

a headache specialist and you may have to pay for them yourself.

- The Cefaly device stimulates the part of the trigeminal nerve in your head that runs above your eye. Most headaches and migraine involve this nerve. Cefaly connects to an adhesive electrode placed on your forehead and generates precise micro-impulses to stimulate the trigeminal nerve endings.
- The gammaCore device produces set doses of non-invasive stimulation (nVNS) when you hold it against your neck, sending mild electrical stimulation through the skin to activate the vagus nerve in your neck.
- The 'sTMS mini' device uses single pulse transcranial magnetic stimulation (sTMS). You hold it against the back of your head to deliver a very brief pre-set magnetic pulse that generates mild electric currents in the brain and interrupts brain activity linked to migraine.

Children can get migraine.

It can take longer to identify the condition in children, as migraine symptoms are different in children and adults. Four in 100 children have abdominal migraine that

affects their stomach rather than their head. This usually stops as they get older, but they may then develop migraine headaches.

Supplements

A dietary supplement is a product that contains ingredients to supplement your diet, such as vitamins, minerals, herbs, amino acids and substances such as enzymes.



Many people with migraine try supplements to help their symptoms. However, there is limited evidence about how effective most of these are. Only riboflavin (B2), magnesium and co-enzyme Q10 have been found to be potentially effective as preventive migraine treatments.

More research is needed into the possible benefits of other supplements claimed to help migraine, including feverfew (a medicinal herb), melatonin, vitamins B6, B9 and B12, vitamin E and vitamin C.

If you're planning to take a supplement to treat migraine, speak to your GP to make sure there are no reasons it may be unsafe for you, such as interaction with other medications.

Most supplements are unlikely to cause you any harm. Make sure you buy them from a reputable place such as a health food store.

Speak to your GP if you notice a change in your symptoms or other potential side effects. Evidence suggests supplements are most effective in less severe presentations of migraine and for people with episodic migraine. It is likely to take up to eight weeks to see if a supplement is helping and up to three months to see the full benefit.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is the technique of piercing the body with a solid needle for therapeutic purposes. It is extremely safe



if delivered by trained practitioners. There is some evidence to show that acupuncture can help prevent migraine and chronic tension-type headache.

The two main types are Western medical acupuncture (based on its biological effects on the nervous system, the spinal cord and brain to reduce pain) and traditional Chinese acupuncture (based on correcting a disturbance on the body's 'vital force' that leads to illness).

Acupuncture is not widely available across the NHS, but many NHS pain clinics, GPs and physiotherapists use it as treatment. You may be prescribed a course of up to 10 sessions of acupuncture over 5–8 weeks, especially if other preventive treatments have been ineffective or are unsuitable for you.

Taking part in clinical trials and studies



You might consider volunteering to take part in research to test the benefits of a new treatment for migraine not yet routinely available on the NHS (and there may be no guarantee that it will be). You would try the treatment for a set period and report on its effects on your migraine, possibly through questionnaires, interviews and tests at a research centre.

Your doctor may be able to tell you about any suitable migraine trials or studies and you can also find details of clinical trial and research volunteer opportunities on our website at migrainetrust.org/clinical-trialresearch-opportunities.

The Migraine Trust can be contacted on **0808 802 0066** (Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm) or through our contact form and Live chat service found on our website at migrainetrust.org or by emailing info@migrainetrust.org.



Patient Information Forum

Registered charity in England and Wales (1081300) and Scotland (SC042911). A company limited by guarantee registered in England (3996448).

the
migraine
trust