

What is migraine?

Migraine is a complex, long-term health condition that affects around 1 in 7 people. Migraine attacks can be a whole-body experience that can make it difficult to function normally.



About migraine

If you have migraine, you have repeated migraine attacks. Migraine attacks vary from person to person but typically last between four hours and three days. A prolonged attack can last longer. Most people don't have any symptoms in between migraine attacks.

- Episodic migraine is when you have headache and migraine symptoms on less than 15 days per month.
- Chronic migraine is when you have headache on at least 15 days a month, with migraine symptoms on at least eight of those, for three months or more.

Migraine can have a huge impact on many aspects of your life, including your family and social life, education and work. It can have a negative effect on your mental health too. For some people, migraine may be considered a disability.



Symptoms of migraine

Symptoms can vary from person to person. The most common symptoms of a migraine attack include:

- moderate or severe headache
- being very sensitive to light, sounds and smells
- feeling sick (nausea) and being sick (vomiting).

A migraine headache is often described as a throbbing pain. It's often on one side of your head only. You may notice that it gets worse when you move your head or when you move around.

A migraine attack tends to happen in stages and you may get different symptoms in each of these. These can include feeling very tired (fatigued) and mood changes.

Up to 1 in 3 people may get an aura stage as part of their migraine attacks. An aura is a set of symptoms that includes problems with sight, speech and sensations. Other symptoms can include dizziness, vertigo (a spinning sensation) and hearing problems.



Who gets migraine

Migraine can affect anyone and can start at any age. But it's most common between the ages of 25 and 55. Children can get migraine too. In girls, it often starts during puberty.

Both women and men can get migraine, but it is two to three times more common in women than men.

If you are having regular headaches or other symptoms that you suspect could be migraine, seek advice from your doctor. Keeping a headache diary can be helpful in making a diagnosis.



Causes of migraine

If you have migraine, the nerves in your brain are thought to be more sensitive than normal. A migraine attack starts when the nerves become over-stimulated. This leads to a series of changes involving nerve signals, chemicals and blood vessels in your brain.

Certain triggers may make you more likely to have an attack. These are different for everyone, but may include stress, skipping meals, hormonal changes and changes in your sleep pattern.

It's not fully understood exactly why some people develop migraine. But there is known to be a strong genetic link.



Treatment of migraine

There is currently no cure for migraine. But there are many ways to manage it. These can include:

- acute medicines such as painkillers to reduce or stop symptoms of an attack
- preventive medicines to reduce how often you get migraine attacks and how bad they are.

Non-drug treatments include acupuncture, migraine devices, supplements and behavioural therapies. Reviewing any lifestyle factors or known triggers that may contribute to your attacks may also help.

Find out more

You can read more about migraine on our website at:

- migrainetrust.org/what-is-migraine

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If you have feedback on our information, please get in touch at: feedback@migrainetrust.org

Contact our Helpline on **0808 802 0066** (Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm) or through our contact form and Live Chat service at **migrainetrust.org/support**. You can also email us at **info@migrainetrust.org**.

