

Non-drug treatments for migraine

There are a range of non-drug treatments that may help you to manage your migraine. These include acupuncture, migraine devices, supplements and behavioural therapies.



Reasons to try non-drug treatments

There can be many reasons why you may want to try non-drug treatment options alongside, or instead of medicines for migraine. These may include:

- you already use medicines for other conditions and want to avoid drug interactions
- you have been advised not to take medicines for migraine due to other medical conditions
- you haven't found migraine medicines helpful
- you can't tolerate migraine medicines (you get lots of side effects)
- you want to cut back on painkillers to avoid medication overuse headache
- you are planning a pregnancy and would prefer to avoid medicines
- you prefer not to take medicines for any other reason
- you want to try them alongside medicines, to see if they help improve your migraine.

Always talk to your GP or specialist first before stopping any migraine medicines.



Acupuncture

Acupuncture is a treatment that involves inserting fine needles into different acupuncture points in your body. Traditional Chinese acupuncture aims to correct the flow of energy through your body. In modern medicine, acupuncture is believed to have a direct effect on biological processes in your body.

There is some evidence to show that acupuncture can help prevent migraine. In some people, it may work as well as preventive medicines for migraine, but with fewer side effects. Acupuncture may help you to relax or feel less stressed too, which may also help if this is a migraine trigger for you.

Clinical guidelines in the UK include acupuncture as a potential treatment for migraine. Your doctor may suggest it alongside or instead of preventive medicines, if they haven't worked or are unsuitable for you. However, it's not widely available on the NHS. Most people will need to pay for private treatment.



Migraine devices

Migraine devices are instruments or appliances that you wear or apply to your body. They act on your nervous system to block pain signals.

The main devices available in the UK include:

- external trigeminal nerve stimulation (Cefaly®) – applied to your forehead
- non-invasive vagus nerve stimulation (gammaCore™) – applied to either side of your neck
- single pulse transcranial magnetic stimulation (STMS mini™) – placed at the back of your head
- remote electrical neuromodulation (Nerivio®) – worn on your upper arm.

The devices are not available on the NHS for migraine, but you can buy them privately. Some may need a prescription from a headache specialist or consultant. The Migraine Trust does not endorse any specific products.



Supplements

Many people with migraine take supplements to try and relieve their symptoms or prevent migraine attacks. You can take them alongside medicines. Evidence about how effective they are is often limited, but some people find they help.

The most common supplements for migraine include riboflavin, magnesium and co-enzyme Q10. The doses thought to help with migraine are often higher than usual recommended daily doses. You need to take them every day and it might take up to three months to see the full benefit.

Always check with your GP, pharmacist or specialist before starting a new supplement. They will be able to check whether it's safe for you and for possible interactions.



Other types of non-drug treatment

Other types of non-drug treatments include behavioural techniques. This is where you learn how to cope with or control your response to pain.

Self-help measures include using heat or cold packs to relieve symptoms. Some people find managing any known triggers, or making certain lifestyle changes helps.

Talk to your doctor about the best treatment plan for you.

Find out more

You can read more about non-drug treatment options for migraine on our website at:

- migrainetrust.org/acupuncture
- migrainetrust.org/supplements
- migrainetrust.org/migraine-devices

Last reviewed: February 2025
Next review due: February 2028.

Reviewed by: The Migraine Trust Information and Support Services Team and Reviewer Panel.

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.

