

What You Need to Know About Menstrual Migraine

Migraine headaches are more common in women than in men. This may be due to changes in hormone levels in the body. Sometimes migraines are associated with the menstrual cycle, and these are called menstrual migraines.

What causes migraines?

Migraine headache is a medical condition most likely caused by inflammation in the blood vessels in the brain. The migraine headache can be “triggered” by:

- Sleep patterns: too little or even too much sleep
- Irregular meal patterns and missing meals
- Lights, noises, or odors
- Hormone changes during the menstrual cycle
- Stress and anxiety
- Alcohol (especially red wine)
- Caffeine
- Certain foods, including hot dogs, soy products, and cheese
- Some artificial sweeteners

How are migraines different from other headaches?

Migraines are more severe than “tension” or sinus headaches. Migraines may also cause nausea and/or vomiting, and vision disturbances.

What is menstrual migraine?

Most women who have migraines find they often occur right before, during, or after their menstrual period. They may have headaches at other times of the month as well. A small number of women with migraines have headaches that occur only around their menstrual cycle and not at other times.

Experts think the change in levels of the female hormones estrogen and progesterone during menstruation may cause the migraines. The hormonal changes that occur when taking oral contraceptives or during menopause can also affect women with migraines. During these times, migraines may become better or worse. Experts are not sure which will occur or why there are differences.

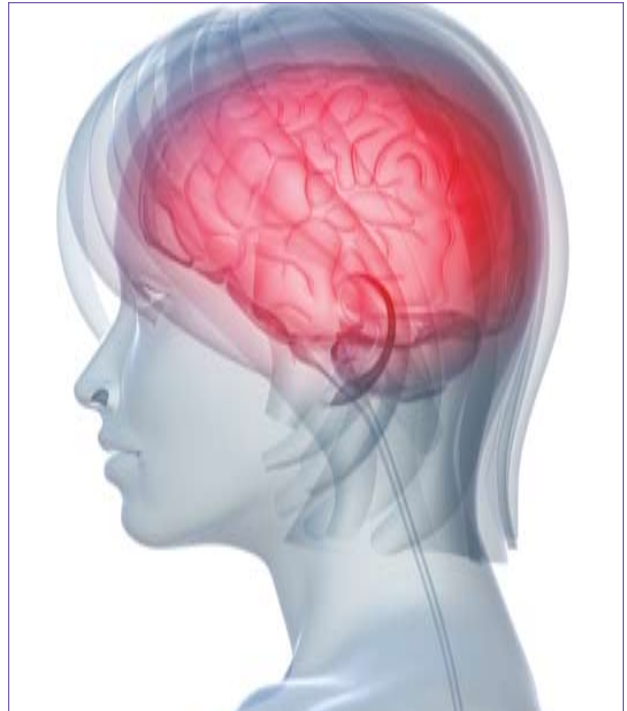
How are menstrual migraines different from other migraines?

Menstrual migraines are generally more severe than regular migraines. They may also last longer and be more resistant to treatment. However, since they can be predicted based on the menstrual cycle, they have the potential to be prevented.

How can menstrual migraine be prevented?

Certain lifestyle changes can help prevent any type of migraine headache. These include:

- Eating healthy, natural foods



- Regular exercise
- Relaxation techniques such as meditation and stress avoidance
- Getting enough sleep

How are migraines treated?

Migraine headaches cannot be cured, but they can be managed. Medication can be taken to stop a migraine that has started, or to prevent one from developing.

Drugs such as aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen that you can buy without a prescription may be helpful. If these do not work, you may need a prescription drug.

One type of prescription therapy commonly used to stop a migraine is a group of drugs called triptans. These drugs work by balancing chemicals in the brain. Triptans are available as pills, tablets that dissolve on the tongue, nasal sprays, and shots. Women with uncontrolled hypertension or heart disease should not take triptans.

To prevent migraines, several different drugs can be used. These include antidepressants, anticonvulsants, beta-blockers, and calcium channel blockers. Hormone therapy drugs may also help. All of these drugs require a prescription and must be taken every day to prevent migraine.

Some migraine drugs should not be used if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

If you think you have menstrual migraine, ask your health care professional if you would benefit from migraine therapy.