

What Is a Migraine?

Headaches are common among youth and usually not dangerous. A migraine is a stronger type of headache. Migraines can cause extreme pain and throbbing and might come with other symptoms, such as feeling sick to your stomach, vomiting, and being sensitive to light and sound.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How common are migraines?

It's very common for children to get headaches. Migraines happen less often but still affect many children and teens. They often begin before age twelve.

For Parents and Caregivers: What should I do if I suspect my child may have a migraine?

Talk to a medical provider if you have concerns. The provider will ask specific questions to help figure out what kind of headaches your child is having.

For Youth: What should I do if I think I may have a migraine?

Talk to an adult you trust or go to your school nurse if you have bad headache. Tell them if you think it might be a migraine.

What kind of help is there for migraines?

Common treatments for children, teens, and young adults include:

- **Medication:** A medical provider may recommend or prescribe medicine to ease your pain or help prevent migraines.
- **Sleep:** Getting enough good-quality sleep can help reduce migraines. Try to keep a regular bedtime and avoid using screens before bed, since the light can make it hard to settle down and fall asleep.
- **Healthy eating and drinking:** Eat regular meals and drink plenty of water. Skipping meals and not drinking enough water can trigger migraines.

What other conditions sometimes occur with migraines?

Some people with migraines may also have anxiety, depression, or other neurological conditions like epilepsy. Tell the medical provider about all symptoms, not just the headaches.

Talking with a Medical Provider

When talking with medical providers or specialists, it can help to:

- **Bring notes!** Write down any concerns you have. Include things others have noticed too.
- **Describe in detail:** Share all symptoms, when they started, and their impact on your head and entire body.
- **Discuss:** Ask about seeing a specialist and what treatments are recommended.

What You Can Do at Home

While waiting for your appointment, it may help to:

- **Keep a headache diary:** Write down when your head hurts, how long it lasts, and how strong the pain feels. This can help you or your provider spot triggers or patterns.
- **Avoid using too much pain medication:** Taking medicine too often can cause other problems. Follow the medical provider's instructions.
- **Keep a routine:** Regular sleep, drinking plenty of water, and eating regularly can help prevent headaches.
- **Try to stay calm and relax:** Most headaches go away quickly and are not a sign of something serious. Stress can make symptoms worse, so try to do things that help you feel calm.

Learning about migraines and getting help is a journey. You're not alone.

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ACT for Youth: Migraines



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About This Series

This series of handouts on health conditions was written by clinicians in Weill Cornell Medicine's Pediatric Mental Health Integration Program, partners in the ACT for Youth CYSHCN Program Center of Excellence at Cornell University.

