

## MIGRAINE: Not all Headaches are Created Equal

*By Philip Savia, Jr., M.D., Laconia Clinic*

Headaches are unpleasant for anyone—for some, they can be debilitating.

There are many types of headaches, but one of the most common is migraine. According to the National Headache Foundation, nearly 30 million Americans suffer from migraine headaches. People suffering from migraines may have any or all of the following symptoms:

- Pain, typically on one side of the head
- Pulsating or throbbing pain
- Nausea or vomiting
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Visual disturbances or aura
- Increased pain with exertion, such as climbing stairs

There is no cure for migraines, but there is good news for those suffering from these painful headaches—with the proper education and treatment, they can be managed and controlled.

### **Prevention**

It is best to try to prevent migraines through lifestyle changes and management. While everyone has unique triggers for their migraines, there are some common triggers, including red wine, aged cheeses, sausage, monosodium glutamate (MSG), and aspartame. Skipping meals, varying sleep patterns, smoking, and excessive caffeine intake can also increase the likelihood of migraine.

Track your migraines, and keep a headache diary to try to identify common threads, or things that seem to cause migraines for you. If possible, modify your diet or lifestyle to reduce your chances of migraine.

### **Treatment**

If migraine is interfering with your daily activities, it is time to see a doctor. Be prepared to describe your migraine history, and bring your headache diary, which will be a helpful tool in developing a treatment plan for you.

Over the past 15 years, a number of new medications have become available, and they are very effective. Many of them are also available in generic form, so they are affordable. If you have

frequent migraines, a preventive medication might be appropriate for you; if they are infrequent, you may need something to help deal with migraines when they occur.

Other treatment options, including thermal biofeedback, stress management, relaxation techniques, holistic treatments, and even modified eating and exercise plans may also be effective for you.

Whether you are able to prevent migraines from happening, or you need help coping with them when they occur, the bottom line is this: You don't have to live with migraine pain.

***Dr. Philip Savia is a board certified neurologist specializing in headaches, who is now seeing patients at Laconia Clinic. Prior to joining the Clinic, Dr. Savia spent 20 years as the Medical Director of the Salt Lake Headache Clinic in Salt Lake City, Utah.***

***Dr. Savia is now accepting new patients. To make an appointment, please call 524-5151.***

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