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## Migraine Headaches

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Migraine headache is a common neurologic condition, and while the exact cause remains unknown, there are many ways to address this condition and decrease the severity and frequency of symptoms.

Migraine is typically a moderate to severe headache lasting hours to days, often occurring on one side of the head and associated with pulsating pain. Sensitivity to bright lights and loud noises and/or nausea or vomiting are common features of migraine. Migraine may be triggered by routine physical activity and in some people associated with a reversible visual change that occurs prior to the headache.

The diagnosis of migraine is made by a doctor after evaluation of history and neurologic exam. There is no medical test that can confirm the diagnosis of migraine. Diagnostic imaging of the brain, such as an MRI, is often unnecessary if symptoms are typical of migraine and neurologic exam is normal.

There are many lifestyle modifications that can be made to try to reduce the frequency and severity of migraine symptoms. Migraine triggers vary from person to person. Common triggers include heavy use of caffeine, tobacco use, foods (chocolate, preserved meats), alcohol use, increased stress, poor sleep, hormonal changes and changes in weather and altitude.

There are many pharmaceutical options available both for acute migraine treatment and preventative migraine treatment:

- Acute migraine treatment includes both over-the-counter and prescription medications with plan tailored to the individual. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories are probably the most common example of an acute treatment. Use of acute migraine treatment exceeding 10 days per month can increase the frequency and severity of migraine.
- Preventative migraine treatment may be considered in people who experience frequent, disabling migraine symptoms. This treatment strategy is either a supplement or prescription medication that is taken on a daily basis to reduce the frequency and severity of symptoms.

Developing a partnership with your primary care provider or neurologist can help individualize treatment strategies of this common neurologic condition. Active involvement on the part of the patient can help improve treatment success. While the exact mechanism of migraine remains uncertain, many effective strategies exist for improvement of symptoms.