

# WebMD<sup>®</sup> Health Highlights

## HEADACHES & MIGRAINES

June 2013

**HEALTH CHECK**  
~~~~~  
Could It Be a Migraine?  
pg. 5

**HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS**  
~~~~~  
Tips for Pain Relief  
pg. 4

**LIVING HEALTHY**  
~~~~~  
Busting Migraine Myths  
pg. 3

**BY THE NUMBERS**  
~~~~~  
Migraine Facts & Stats  
pg. 2

This supplement contains a selection of articles from **WebMD** MAGAZINE

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BY THE NUMBERS  
**MIGRAINES**

FACTS AND STATS ON TOP HEALTH CONDITIONS

By Heather Hatfield

**2**

Percent of U.S. population that lives with chronic migraine (15 or more days in a month)

**Forty**

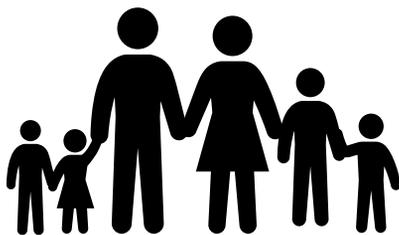
Percentage of people with migraines who have been professionally diagnosed



U.S. households where someone has migraines: 1 in 4

**28 million**

Americans living with migraines



Share of people living with migraines who have a family member who also gets migraines: **70%**

**20 to 45**

Age at which a person is most likely to have migraines

**38**

Percentage of those with migraines who could benefit from preventive therapy



Percentage of people with migraines who have an aura beforehand: **33%**

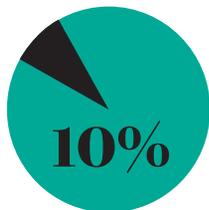
**66%**

Migraine attacks in which **only one side** of the head is affected



**33%**

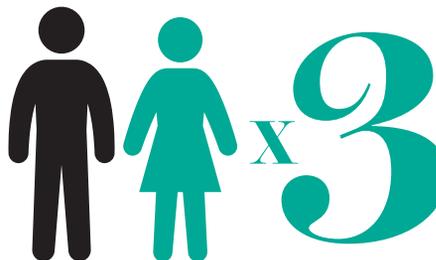
Migraine attacks in which **both sides of the head** are affected



Percentage of world population that report having a migraine last year



How long migraines usually last: **4 to 72 hours**



How much **more likely women** are to get migraines compared with men: **3 times**



How often someone in the U.S. goes to the emergency room for a migraine or headache: Every **10 seconds**



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LIVING HEALTHY

# Myth Busters

THINK YOU KNOW ABOUT MIGRAINES?  
WE SEPARATE FACT FROM FICTION

By *Christina Boufis*

**You wake up with one side of your head pounding.** Moving your head is agonizing. The slightest noise amplifies the pain. Maybe you're nauseous or even vomiting. You want nothing more than to lie in a dark room undisturbed and wait for the storm to pass. If you're one of the nearly 30 million Americans, including children, who have migraines, you may be familiar with some or all of these symptoms.

But while the pain of a migraine is well documented, the causes of these debilitating headaches are less understood and misperceptions persist. To shed light on the mystery of migraines, neurologist and migraine expert Peter J. Goadsby, MBBS, director of the University of California, San Francisco Headache Center, debunks some of the top myths.

**Migraines are a woman's issue.**

Not true. "It's a condition that certainly occurs in men," says Goadsby. However, women are three times as likely to get migraines. Why the disproportion? Researchers believe female hormones



**APP BONUS!**  
We tackle even more migraine myths.

**RELIEF MAP**  
TAKE STEPS TO PREVENT MIGRAINES

**Get regular sleep.** Lack of sleep is a common migraine trigger, but so is getting too many zzz's. Avoid "weekend headaches" by waking at the same time every day, advises the National Headache Foundation.

**Don't miss a meal.** Skipping meals or being dehydrated can trigger a migraine, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

**Write it out.** Keep a diary that includes weather changes, sleep, stress levels, exercise, menstrual cycles, and the severity and length of your migraines.

are to blame. Many women get migraines around their period or sometimes mid-cycle when they ovulate, Goadsby says. And migraines often improve after menopause, when estrogen levels decline.

**All migraines are severe.** "That's a misperception," says Goadsby. People who get migraines tend to experience symptoms like pain on one side of the head, throbbing, increased pain with movement, nausea, and/or light and sound sensitivity, says Goadsby. "Some migraines are very severe and some are milder," he says. But both types are considered migraines because the biology that causes them is the same.

**All migraines are accompanied by an "aura."** "That's a big myth," says Goadsby. Only about a third of those who get migraines have what's called "migraine aura," a neurological brain disturbance that typically occurs 30 to 60 minutes before the headache. You might see flashing lights or zigzagging lines and lose your vision temporarily. But auras aren't just visual, he says. "Some people have pins and needles that move up their arms or legs. Some have speech disturbance—they can't understand things or can't speak properly. Some have weakness down one side of the body."

Reviewed by  
**Brunilda Nazario, MD**  
WebMD Lead Medical Editor



# Health Highlights

Reviewed by **Brunilda Nazario, MD**, WebMD Lead Medical Editor

## CHECKUP

# HEADS UP

JUNE IS MIGRAINE AWARENESS MONTH. GET RELIEF WITH THESE TIPS

By **Heather Hatfield**

**1** *Get help*  
An estimated 47% of people globally had a headache in the past year. In the United States and the United Kingdom, only half of people with migraines had seen a doctor.



**2** *Beware of chocolate*  
Ingredients in chocolate can trigger a headache. Avoid it for a couple of weeks, then re-indulge. If a headache happens, avoid it forever.

**3** *Go alcohol-free*  
Alcohol can dilate your blood vessels and dehydrate you, bringing on a massive migraine. Skip it altogether, or drink moderately.

**4** *Control stress*  
Use relaxation techniques to help stop a headache before it starts.

**5** *Plan for periods*  
A woman's hormones during her periods can make migraines a nightmare. Plan ahead: Avoid other triggers and practice stress control. Menstrual migraine treatments are available.

**6** *Sleep tight*  
Sleep disorders can lower the oxygen in your blood, causing headaches. Talk to a sleep specialist to treat your sleep and help your head.

**7** *Cut caffeine*  
If you skip your morning joe, your head could throb. Consider cutting coffee out of your diet to lower your daily dose of caffeine and improve your migraines.

**NEW!**

## WebMD Pain Coach

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Download **WebMD's Pain Coach App** to get personalized tips and track your triggers and pain levels.



## HEALTH CHECK

# HEADACHE OR MIGRAINE?

**Terrym2442** has been “plagued” with headaches for about 35 years and has long thought they were sinus headaches. But recently this WebMD migraine and headache community member has developed new symptoms, including nausea and sensitivity to light and sound. “I can’t help but wonder if these are migraines,” Terrym2442 writes. The symptoms of migraines and other types of headaches often overlap. How much do you know about the differences between the two?



LIZ VON HOENE/CORBIS/IGLOW IMAGES

## QUIZ

- Stress might cause regular headaches but not migraines.
  - True
  - False
- You know it’s a sinus headache if you feel pain and pressure in the sinus area.
  - True
  - False
- Only migraines happen with nausea.
  - True
  - False
- Migraines can include sensitivity to light and sound.
  - True
  - False

**Answers:** **1. False.** Stress can trigger migraines. So can anxiety, hormonal changes (such as during PMS), skipping meals, getting too little sleep, red wine, foods with nitrate or MSG, and weather changes. **2. False.** A migraine with sinus symptoms can also occur with pain and pressure in the sinus area. Sinus headache pain, however, is not as severe as with migraines. Sinus headaches also tend to have a thick yellow or green nasal discharge, which can be a symptom of a sinus infection or congestion due to a cold or allergies. **3. True.** Tension and sinus headaches don’t make you feel sick to your stomach, although without question you may feel lousy. A migraine often does include nausea. **4. True.** Many people report that normal lights and noises are uncomfortable when they’re having a migraine.

### Sources:

National Institutes of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, HHS, WebMD Migraines & Headaches health center



**Q**

ASK YOUR DOCTOR

- Can migraines be prevented? If so, how?
- What types of food can trigger headaches and migraines?
- Is exercise good or bad for migraines?
- Will reducing stress help prevent migraines?