

Exercise just as good as drugs at preventing migraines: study

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Although exercise is often prescribed as a treatment for migraine, there has not previously been sufficient scientific evidence that it really works. However, research from the Sahlgrenska Academy has now shown that exercise is just as good as drugs at preventing migraines.

Doctors use a variety of different methods to prevent migraines these

days: on the pharmaceutical side a drug based on the substance topiramate has proved effective, while non-medical treatments with well-documented effects include relaxation exercises.

Exercise is also frequently recommended as a treatment, though there has not been sufficient scientific evidence that it really has any effect on [migraine](#) patients.

In a randomized controlled study researchers from the University of Gothenburg's Sahlgrenska Academy have now analysed how well exercise works as a preventative treatment for migraines relative to relaxation exercises and topiramate.

Published in the journal *Cephalalgia*, the study involved 91 migraine patients, a third of whom were asked to exercise for 40 minutes three times a week under the supervision of a [physiotherapist](#), with another third doing relaxation exercises, and the final third given topiramate. The study lasted for a total of three months, during which the patients' migraine status, [quality of life](#), [aerobic capacity](#) and level of physical activity were evaluated before, during and after their treatment. Follow-ups were then carried out after three and six months.

The results show that the number of migraines fell in all three groups. Interestingly, there was no difference in the preventative effect between the three treatments.

"Our conclusion is that [exercise](#) can act as an alternative to relaxations and topiramate when it comes to preventing migraines, and is particularly appropriate for patients who are unwilling or unable to take preventative medicines," says Emma Varkey, the physiotherapist and doctoral student at the Sahlgrenska Academy who carried out the study.

More information: Link to article: [cep.sagepub.com/content/early/ ...](http://cep.sagepub.com/content/early/...)

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