

Migraine matters

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(HealthDay)—Most headaches quickly respond to over-the-counter medications. But if you're among the millions of Americans with migraines, you struggle with a severe pounding that can make you

nauseous and sensitive to light and sound.

Women are three times more likely to get migraines than men, according to the U.S. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, but when one strikes, it's debilitating for anyone.

If painkillers don't help, or migraines are more than once a week, see your doctor. They're often related to other [health problems](#), and the more migraines you have, the worse they get. Besides [prescription medications](#), take steps to lower their frequency and make them more bearable when they do occur.

The most important prevention tool is identifying your triggers so you can then avoid them. Triggers can be anything from foods to flickering lights or dehydration. When a [migraine](#) strikes, write down what you ate, how much you slept, and how long it lasted to keep track of possible causes.

Common migraine triggers:

- Skipping meals.
- Bright lights.
- Loud noises.
- Strong odors.
- Menstrual cycle points.
- Stress.
- Alcohol and caffeine.
- Change in sleep schedule.
- Certain foods.
- Artificial sweeteners.

Positive steps you can take include exercising regularly, trying relaxation therapy, and eating a healthful diet. Avoid alcohol and caffeine. And

keep the same sleep schedule since too little sleep is a common trigger.

Ease a migraine by lying down in a dark, quiet room with a cool cloth on your forehead. Drink water and take a painkiller.

If you take a prescription drug for your migraines, follow the instructions exactly to avoid rebound headaches caused by taking too much.

There's greater relief on the horizon. New very targeted migraine drugs are in the testing phase and, if approved, could be more effective than existing medications, according to researchers at the University of California, San Francisco.

More information: The University of California, San Francisco has detailed guidelines on [migraines](#).

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