

Hormonal changes may trigger migraines in some women

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Evidence supports link between fluctuations in female hormones and painful headaches.

(HealthDay) -- Hormonal changes are a major reason women are far more likely than men to have migraine headaches, research suggests.

About 30 million Americans suffer from migraines, and women are nearly three times more likely to have them than men, National Headache Foundation data indicates.

"[Hormonal changes](#) are a big contributor to the higher female incidence," Dr. Michael Moskowitz, a professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School in Boston, said in a news release from the Society for Women's Health Research. "There are lines of evidence that support this from lab to [clinical evidence](#) and a decreased [although not abolished] incidence in postmenopausal females."

Women who experience migraines may find they often occur just before or just after the onset of menstruation. Also, women's patterns of migraines may change during pregnancy and/or menopause.

Many other factors can increase the risk of having [migraine headaches](#) for both men and women:

- Heredity: People with a family history of the painful attacks, and especially those with one or more first-degree relatives with migraines, are at significantly increased risk.
- Age: People typically experience migraines between the ages of 15 and 55, and the first attack usually occurs before age 40.
- Medical conditions: Certain health problems, such as [high blood pressure](#), anxiety, depression, stroke and epilepsy, have been associated with migraines.

Although there is no cure, migraines can be managed effectively with the help of a doctor. Many drugs are available for prevention and pain relief, and [lifestyle changes](#) can eliminate some triggers that cause migraines, Moskowitz said in the news release.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke has more about [migraines](#).

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