

# TALKING WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

## HOW IS MIGRAINE DIAGNOSED?

Migraine is a common neurological disease in which a person has attacks of moderate to severe head pain lasting 4–72 hours that are often accompanied by symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and extreme sensitivity to light and sound.

**Health care providers diagnose migraine by evaluating the history of your symptoms.** Some tests (for example, blood work, imaging, head X-ray) may be performed to rule out other conditions, but there is no definitive test to show you have migraine.

That's why it is so important to prepare for your health care visit and be ready to articulate your personal experience. Your health care provider will need to know about your symptoms and their impact on your daily life and ability to function at work, school, and home. Clear communication assists your health care provider in accurately diagnosing you and designing a treatment plan tailored to you.

## HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER VISIT

To help your health care provider understand your migraine experience, consider keeping a headache diary and bringing the information recorded to your visit.

Important items to track in your **headache diary** are:



Pain severity  
and symptoms



Frequency and  
duration of attacks



Medications or other  
treatments used



Ability to function at  
work, school, or home

You may also want to track possible personal triggers, or factors that may potentially set off a migraine attack. **Migraine triggers** do not cause attacks but may increase the risk of one occurring. Triggers are unique to each person and can be difficult to identify, but some common ones include sensitivities to light, sound, odor, and touch, certain foods and drinks, hormonal fluctuations (for women), weather changes, and stress.



# QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

Prepare a list of questions to ask your health care provider during your visit. Questions may vary depending on whether you are being evaluated for the first time or receiving ongoing treatment. Some suggested questions to help get the conversation started are:

## INITIAL EVALUATION

- 1 How do I know if what I am experiencing is migraine?
- 2 What factors might contribute to my migraine?
- 3 What treatment options are available to me?
- 4 What are the risks and benefits of these treatments?
- 5 How can I handle treatment side effects?
- 6 Could any of my current medications make a migraine attack worse?

## ONGOING TREATMENT

- 1 How do I know if my migraine management plan is working?
- 2 What lifestyle and behavioral changes may help me control my migraine symptoms?
- 3 How often should I be seen and evaluated?
- 4 Where can I find resources to help educate myself, family, and friends about migraine?
- 5 What resources exist to help me understand financial options to pay for my treatment?

You can help foster clear communication with your doctor by asking direct, specific questions. Don't be afraid to restate what your health care provider has told you or to ask clarifying questions to ensure that you understand the answers.