



MIGRAINE HEALTH CARE LEAFLET

Introduction

A migraine is usually a severe headache felt as a throbbing pain at the front or side of the head. Some people also have other symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting and increased sensitivity to light or sound.

There are several types of migraine, including:

- **Migraine with aura** – where there are warning signs before the migraine begins, such as seeing flashing lights
- **Migraine without aura** - where the migraine occurs without warning signs
- **Migraine aura without headache** – also known as a silent migraine, where an aura or other migraine symptoms are experienced, but a headache does not develop

How Migraines Are Treated

There is no cure for migraines, but there are a number of treatments available to help reduce the symptoms. These include:

- Painkillers – including over the counter medications such as paracetamol and ibuprofen
- Triptans – medications that can help reverse the changes in the brain that may cause migraines
- Anti-emetics – medications often used to reduce nausea and vomiting.

During an attack, many people find that sleeping or lying in a darkened room can also help.

What Causes Migraines?

The exact cause of migraines is unknown, although they are thought to be the result of temporary changes in the chemicals and blood vessels in the brain.

Some people find migraine attacks are associated with certain triggers, which can include starting their period, stress, tiredness and certain foods or drinks.

Preventing Migraines

If you suspect a specific trigger is causing migraines, such as stress or a certain type of food, avoiding this trigger may help reduce the risk of experiencing migraines.

It may also help to maintain a generally healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise, sleep and meals, as well as staying well hydrated and limiting intake of caffeine and alcohol.

Medication can also be used to prevent migraines, such as the anti-seizure medication topiramate and propranolol that is usually used to treat high blood pressure.

When To Seek Medical Advice

Students should be encouraged to visit a GP if they have frequent migraine symptoms or severe migraine symptoms that cannot be controlled with over the counter painkillers.

You should call 999 for an ambulance immediately if any of the following symptoms are experienced:

- Paralysis or weakness in one or both arms and/or one side of the face
- Slurred or garbled speech
- A sudden agonising headache resulting in a blinding pain unlike anything experienced before
- Headache along with a high temperature (fever), stiff neck, mental confusion, seizures, double vision and a rash

These symptoms may be a sign of a more serious condition, such as a stroke or meningitis, and should be assessed by a doctor as soon as possible.