Ride the lightning
Migraines. A young person’s guide.
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Chapter 1
What is a migraine?
What is a migraine?

Migraine is one of the most common health disorders affecting the body’s nervous system and lots of research is being done into what exactly causes them. Despite what people might say, it is much more than just a headache!

In fact, migraine can affect the whole body and can result in many symptoms, sometimes without a headache at all. Those who suffer with migraine will understand how challenging, painful and disruptive it can be. Symptoms are different for everyone and many younger children experience their migraine as abdominal pain with no headache at all.

Symptoms may include:

- Headaches
- Nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain
- Visual changes (blind spots, zig-zags, flashing lights, etc)
- Feeling sensitive to light, sound or smells
- Pins and needles
- Tingling or numbness
- Dizziness or vertigo
- Difficulty concentrating
- Slurring or speech problems
You’re not alone!

Did you know...

People suffered from migraine attacks as far back as 5000 years ago in ancient Egypt!

Did you know...

Migraine affects 1 in 7 people in the UK and is amongst the top 20 disabling lifetime conditions.

Did you know...

Before the age of 12, boys and girls are equally likely to be affected.

Remember, migraines have been around for a long time, and are WAY more common than you realise. At Migraine Action, we are here to listen and provide the right information to help you manage your migraines. Contact our friendly helpline today on 08456 011 033.
Chapter 2
Get the knowledge
Stages of an attack

Prodrome

This is the warning stage that an attack is coming. You may get agitated, crave sweet food or yawn more than normal.

Aura

One in five people experience aura, which could be visual such as zig-zags or flashing lights. You could also experience pins and needles or odd smells.
Main attack

This can include a very painful headache, but not always. You could suffer from nausea, vomiting, slurred speech and many other symptoms.

Postdrome

After the main attack, you may feel exhausted or hungrier than usual. This recovery phase is sometimes known as the ‘migraine hangover’!

Not everyone experiences all of these stages during an attack.
Email us for more information at info@migraine.org.uk
Facts and Stats

Migraine affects around 18% of 13–14 year olds

Sufferers under 30 are up to six times more likely to suffer from depression

A migraine attack can last from 4 to 72 hours or even more

In the UK, there are an estimated 190,000 migraine attacks every day
Red flags

If you experience different symptoms from your usual migraine, it’s important that you speak to your doctor as soon as possible. Please contact us for info on specific types of migraines and headache disorders such as cluster headaches and trigeminal neuralgia.

Possible ‘red flags’ include:

- The sudden onset of a severe headache (especially one that wakes you)
- Pain you would describe as ‘the worst headache ever’
- Severe headache in the morning with vomiting
- Headache following a head injury
- Significant changes to your pattern of headache including any new symptoms
Chapter 3
Triggers
What can trigger an attack?

Sometimes, certain factors that trigger your migraine can be things like eating a particular food, changing routine, lack of sleep or sleeping too much.

It can be tricky to identify what is causing your migraines and it could be any number of things you were doing up to 48 hours before you felt unwell. Remember that everybody’s triggers are different. Don’t avoid things just because you heard that they cause a migraine. Find out what works for you!

You can call our Migraine Action helpline, on

08456 011 033

Ask us for your free migraine diary to help you find your triggers!
A trigger can be one or many things at once!

- Hormones
- Stress
- No sleep
- Smells
- Heat
- Light
- Citrus fruits
- Hunger
- Travel
- Chocolate
- Caffeine
- Shock
- Excitement
- Weather
- Shift work
Chapter 4
Stay one move ahead!
Stay one move ahead!

Although there is no current cure for migraine, there are many things you can do to try and avoid them or limit their effects.

Keep a diary

Many young people keep a diary to help them discuss all aspects of their migraine with their doctor or us here at Migraine Action. Contact us for your free diary to help you track your migraines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Pain score (1-10)</th>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>Possible triggers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Stay healthy

You may find your migraines frustrating as they can sadly interfere with your daily plans. Taking a few key steps to keep healthy can often help to reduce the onset of migraine.

Drink 1 – 2 litres of water a day
Eat regularly, don’t skip meals
Keep physically active
Reduce caffeine and sugar
Maintain regular sleep
Limit your alcohol intake
Limit time in front of computers
50% of younger women...

...say that their periods affect their migraines, so keeping a diary to see if they link can be really helpful. Some young women find that methods such as the contraceptive pill increase their migraines; whereas others experience less as a result! It’s important to give your doctor or nurse as much info as possible about your migraines, so that you can consider all the options available.

Make time for you!

Our lives are often moving so fast that we find it hard to slow down and take time for ourselves and many find that stress can increase their migraines. It’s really important to take time to do something you enjoy like going outdoors or listening to music. We know that migraines can be very unpredictable but setting aside time to relax can really help.
Chapter 5
What can I do next?
Only 60%...

...of migraine sufferers consult their doctor because they assume that nothing can be done to help them.

It is really important to talk to your GP if you think you are suffering from migraine, as they will be able to tell you what treatments are available.

You can also visit our website for more details on the following treatments as well as others too.
Over the counter Treatments

Pain relief like Ibuprofen, Aspirin or Paracetamol can sometimes be enough to relieve your migraine. You should take these as soon as possible as your digestive system shuts down during the attack phase (gastric stasis).

Soluble tablets (dissolved in water) are a good option as they are absorbed quickly, or try taking tablets with a fizzy drink.

Acute Treatments

These prescription drugs can help to take away or reduce pain and discomfort. These include triptans, anti-inflammatories and anti-sickness medication.

Triptans help vessels around the brain narrow and come as tablets, nasal sprays or injections. Anti-inflammatories block a chemical believed to contribute to migraines. Anti-sickness meds help if you suffer nausea or vomiting.
Preventative Treatments

These help reduce frequency and severity of attacks, usually taken at a regular time each day. These depend on your age.

They can include a host of medications at a low dose including beta-blockers, anti-seizure medications, anti-depressants, anti-inflammatories, nerve stimulation and Botox.

Medication Warning!

The best treatment will depend on your age, medical history and other factors. All meds come with a risk of side effects. Taking too many can lead to Medication Overuse Headaches.

You should always talk to your GP about options available and make them aware of any side effects. There are lots of options and, just as everyone’s migraine is different, everyone’s treatment is too!
Many young migraine sufferers have benefited from options other than medication. Here are just a few examples.

**Acupuncture**

This involves the insertion of very thin needles at different points on your body to help restore your body’s balance.

**Cognitive Behaviour Therapy**

This is a form of talking therapy, which can help you change the way you think about your migraine and relieve anxieties.

**Non-Invasive Devices**

These small electrical devices (e.g. Cefaly or GammaCore) apply safe electric pulses, which help prevent or relieve pain.
Physiotherapy, Osteopathy and Chiropractic

This may include massage, hot treatment or manual techniques.

Reflexology

This is a massage technique using ‘reflex’ points on the body to relieve tension.

Supplements

Magnesium, Coenzyme Q10, Ginger and Vitamin B2 are a few supplements that have been known to help reduce migraines.

Thai Chi and Yoga

These may help you to relax using slow, smooth body movements and breath control.

Some options have age restrictions and criteria that you must meet. There may be side effects, so speak to your GP or get in touch with us at Migraine Action on info@migraine.org.uk
Chapter 6
Mythbusting
Myth

“Everyone has a specific trigger for their migraine”
Fact

Not everyone can identify their specific trigger. For some it’s a combination of things which can also change over time.
Myth

“"A migraine attack usually lasts for an hour""
Fact

There is no set time for how long a migraine typically lasts, but it is said to be anywhere between 4 – 72 hours.
Fact
Chocolate is often given as a typical 'trigger' but it could be related to a whole number of food or drinks, or may not be triggered by diet at all.

Myth
"If you stop eating chocolate, your migraines will stop too"
Fact

Chocolate is often given as a typical ‘trigger’ but it could be related to a whole number of food or drinks, or may not be triggered by diet at all.
“You should be able to carry on as normal if you have a migraine”
Fact

Migraines affect everyone differently. They can impact your social life and work. Being open about your condition can help and Migraine Action offers a confidential helpline for young people affected.
Migraine misconceptions

Unless you’ve had a migraine, it is hard to understand how it feels and the pain it can cause.

Migraine is a disabling condition that may need treatment and always requires plenty of understanding. That is why it’s really important for us all to challenge misconceptions surrounding this neurological disorder.

Have you heard people say any of the following?
“It can’t hurt that bad, can it?”

“You should really get those headaches seen to!”

“Just take a break and you’ll be fine”

“Get a hobby and take your mind off it”
Chapter 7
Get involved
Eddie’s Story

I had my first migraine around 10 years old and I’m now 17. I suffered aura but at that time didn’t know what it was. Then, the pain got really bad. I was writhing around on the floor so my Mum took me to A & E. Since then, I have had many attacks. Sometimes I can go 6 months to a year without one, but once, I had two in a week!

I have spent a long time trying to work out my triggers - I stopped eating chocolate, never had a lie in, took regular exercise – nothing helped. I kept a diary and found that my attacks happen when I relax after a stressful time or when on holiday. So, for me, they happen when I am most relaxed! This goes against what most people assume; that stress causes migraines. Days that feel stormy and heavy also have an effect; I can sense a sort of electricity in the air and I don’t feel good. When an attack starts, my lips will tingle and my arms will go dead. I can’t think straight or speak properly.
This is very frightening for my friends the first time they see it. I need to be taken somewhere safe and wait for the hours of agony to pass. I vomit, hopefully in the bucket, but have also ruined duvets as it is all so sudden and uncontrollable. Then, the horrific headache begins. The next day, I feel really groggy and I’m not my usual self until another full day.

My migraines are so unpredictable

I tend to hang around more at home than go out with my friends. People don’t really understand when you say you have a migraine; they think you just have a headache. It is so much more! I am determined not to let this stop me doing what I want to do in life.
Become a member!

We want to reach out to all young people affected by migraine and that’s why we offer...

🎉 Free membership for under 18’s
📜 £10 membership for 18-24’s (usually £25)

Benefits include

- 50% off our Specialist Nurse Service
- Getting involved in the latest research studies
- Discounted entry to our events
- The chance to meet others affected by migraine
- Quarterly magazines
- Monthly e-newsletters
- Info leaflets

Sign up today!

info@migraine.org.uk
08456 011 033

“Thank you for what you do...it has given me my life back” (Ann, 18)
Migraine Action

As the UK’s leading support charity for all those affected by migraine, we provide the information you need to take back control!

We strive to ensure that young people with migraine are no longer misdiagnosed, misunderstood or missing out.

Helpline: 08456 011 033

Follow us @MigraineAction

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info@migraine.org.uk

migraine.org.uk

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Share your experiences.
Stay connected!

For emotional support: samaritans.org or youngminds.org.uk