

Menstrual Migraine

How to identify and treat menstrual migraine

Many women report an increased frequency of migraine attacks around the time of their period, referred to as menstrual migraine. Menstrual migraine is caused by a drop in estrogen levels before the start of menstrual flow. There are a number of management options that you can provide to help your patients.

Migraine and Estrogen

Migraine attacks can be triggered by declining estrogen levels that occur:

- At the end of the luteal phase
- During the pill-free week in women on cyclical hormonal contraception
- In women after bilateral oophorectomy without estrogen replacement
- Around ovulation in some women

Menstrual Migraine

Definition: migraine attacks that occur between two days prior to menses up to three days after it starts at least 66% of the time.

Subtypes:

- Pure menstrual migraine: Attacks occur only in association with menses.
- Menstrually related migraine: Attacks occur throughout the cycle but worsen during the perimenstrual window.



Treatment Options for Menstrual Migraine

Unlike acute treatment, preventive medications are taken regularly to prevent migraine attacks from happening. These include the following:

Type	Use	Notes
Oral Triptans	Acute and/or short-term prevention	
Oral NSAIDs	Acute and/or short-term prevention	
Oral Gepants	Acute and/or short-term prevention	
IV Magnesium	IV acute and/or oral prevention	
Hormonal	Perimenstrual add-back estrogen Continuous hormonal contraception	Pure menstrual migraine tends to be more responsive to hormonal treatment than menstrually related migraine.

Type	Subtype
Triptans	Sumatriptan subcutaneous
	Sumatriptan nasal spray
	Zolmitriptan nasal spray
NSAIDs	Ketorolac intramuscular
	Ketorolac nasal spray
Antiemetic suppository	
Nerve blocks	
Infusion	ketorolac
	ondansetron
	magnesium

A Note About Biphasic and Triphasic Contraception

Biphasic and triphasic contraception contribute to fluctuating levels of estrogen, which can trigger migraine attacks rather than preventing them.