

Migraine's Contributing Factors

Think of migraine as a disease with a threshold, where a patient's position relative to the threshold determines how frequent, severe, and debilitating the attacks will be. There are many factors that can affect if a patient is above or below the threshold. Understanding these contributing factors not only reduces the chance of a migraine attack on a given day, but also helps doctors suggest effective migraine treatment plans tailored to their patients.



Different Types of Factors

Factors can be sorted into two categories: lifestyle factors and medical factors. Lifestyle factors include habits built into your routine, while medical factors are more physical factors require a close examination of your medical history to understand.

Lifestyle Factors

Sleep
Exercise
Diet
Hydration
Caffeine
Stress
Triggers

Medical Factors

Acute medication use
Other pain disorders
Psychiatric conditions
History of abuse
Obstructive sleep apnea
Hypersensitive nerves

Addressing Your Lifestyle Factors

The best way to adjust your lifestyle factors to reduce your risk for migraine attack is to practice good migraine hygiene. Migraine hygiene is the practice of taking care of yourself in a way that will reduce the likelihood, frequency, intensity, and severity of attacks.

1. Make sure you're getting enough sleep and maintaining a regular sleep routine.
2. Consider including regular exercise as part of your healthy routine.
3. Try to eat a well-balanced diet and avoid skipping meals. Keep inventory of your known or suspected food triggers in a meal planner.
4. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water throughout the day.
5. Pay special attention to your caffeine intake and avoid fluctuations in your caffeine levels.
6. Learn how to manage stress in your everyday life. While stress is largely out of your control, stress management can keep it from affecting your migraine.
7. Identify your individual triggers for migraine by keeping a headache journal and take the appropriate steps to avoid them.

Speaking to Your Doctor About Medical Factors

Here are some tips from the American Migraine Foundation for practicing good migraine hygiene and keeping attacks at bay.

Before visiting a headache specialist, prepare to talk about your medical history as it could influence your treatment plan. An experienced doctor will screen you for common associated conditions, but it always helps to be prepared and ready to share this information. Here is a list of medical factors pertinent to migraine.

Acute medication use — Overuse of acute medications can be a significant issue and contributing medical factor for migraine.

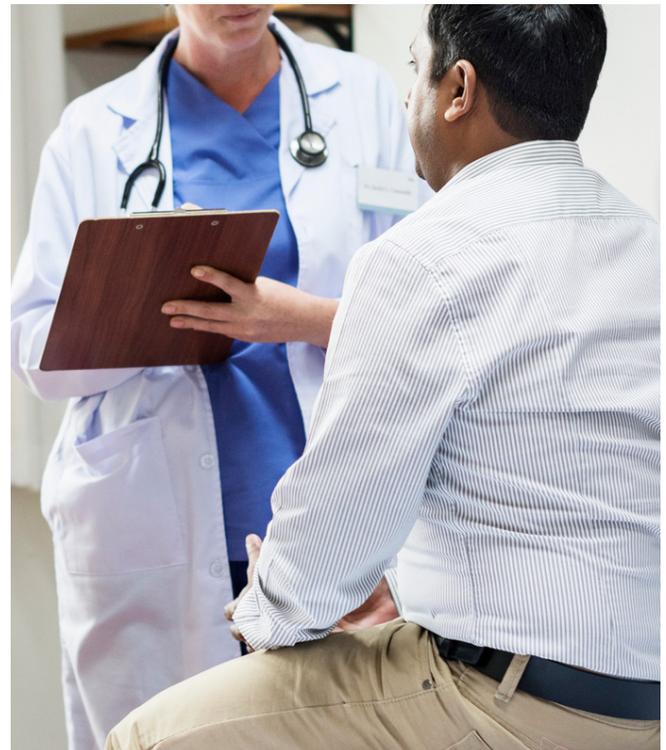
Pain disorders — Treatment for pain disorders other than migraine may significantly influence migraine outcome.

Psychiatric conditions — Mood and anxiety disorders are often comorbid with migraine, meaning that they often appear together although they do not cause one another. Addressing one can often help address the other.

History of abuse — There's a high correlation between abuse and chronic headache disorders, so it's important to identify if it is at play in someone's current state.

Obstructive sleep apnea — Sleep apnea can be a trigger in its own right also contributes to poor sleep routines. Teeth grinding and jaw clenching also contribute to sleep routines and should be checked out by a dentist.

Hypersensitive nerves — Identifying whether the nerves on your scalp area are hypersensitive could help your doctor suggest more effective treatment options.



Creating a Holistic Treatment Plan

Migraine varies patient to patient due to these individual factors, meaning that there's no one-size-fits-all treatment plan. An effective treatment plan accounts for the type of migraine, your lifestyle and your unique medical history. It's important to note that treatment plans aren't just limited to medication, and can also include lifestyle changes or alternative treatments like acupuncture or cognitive behavioral therapy. Work closely with a headache specialist to come up with a treatment plan that suits your needs.

The Next Step

Visit americanmigrainefoundation.org to find a headache specialist who can look at all the factors and suggest a migraine treatment plan for you.

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The mission of the American Migraine Foundation is to mobilize a community for patient support and advocacy, as well as drive and support impactful research that translates into advances for patients with migraine and other disabling diseases that cause severe head pain. Visit americanmigrainefoundation.org for more resources for people living with migraine and their supporters.

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