



Migraine overview

How many people get migraine?

Migraine is the most common disabling headache disorder

The global lifetime prevalence is 10% in men and 22% in women.

Biological similarities between family members means that a vulnerability to migraine is sometimes inherited

How often do migraine attacks usually last?

Attacks usually last 4-72 hours with freedom from symptoms in between, and vary in frequency from one per year to a few times per month.

In most attacks (93%), there is a return to normal within 24 hours.

The usual frequency is one to two migraine attacks per month.

What is chronic migraine?

A small percentage of people may experience Chronic Migraine

This is a headache on 15 or more days per month for 3 consecutive months, of which at least 8 days have features of migraine

What causes a Migraine?

During a migraine attack there are changes in brain chemicals [eg serotonin/5HT, calcitonin gene related peptide (CGRP)], and in brain electrical pathways

A migraine attack occurs when internal or environmental triggers are sufficient to activate these chemical and electrical pathways.

A migraine causes me pain, but also gives me many other symptoms. Why is this?

The reason is that the chemical and electrical changes in migraine can occur in many different parts of the brain.

For example, if the changes occur in the pain areas of the brain this will produce pain.

If the changes occur in parts of the brain that control mood, thinking, sensation, muscle control, vision, sense of smell, sickness, fatigue etc this will produce symptoms in these brain functions

Why do some people get more frequent migraine than others?

The more easily the chemical and electrical changes are triggered, the more frequent and more severe the migraine attacks will be.