



## Migraine Headache - Patient Handout

Migraine is an episodic disabling headache and affects 12% of the American Adult population. It is thought to be an inherited disorder; most migraine patients have a family history of migraine. Women are 3 times more likely to have migraines than men; hormonal issues are thought to be the reason. Characteristics include: throbbing/pulsating pain; moderate to severe degree of pain if not treated early; nausea/vomiting; sensitivity to light and noise; and worsening with activity. The location can be on 1 or both sides of head; can include the neck, jaw, facial and scalp pain.

Many patients have been misdiagnosed as having sinus or tension headache. Sinus symptoms, including facial pain and pressure; nasal congestion; and eye watering are often associated with migraine. Also, neck pain often accompanies migraines and has often caused the misdiagnosis of migraine as tension headache.

Treatment options include:

1. New "triptan" medications (most specific to treat migraines); Current triptans include Imitrex; Maxalt; Zomig; Axert; Relpax; Amerge and Frova.
2. OTC (over the counter) medications (watch for rebound headaches-do not take OTC medication >2 times per week)
3. Butalbital-containing drugs such as Fiorinal/Fioricet/Esgic-Plus/Phrenilin (watch for side-effects such as drowsiness; addictive potential; common cause of rebound headaches if taken in excess). Recommend limit to <15/month if taking.
4. Narcotics such as Vicodin; same side effects as butalbital-containing drugs and can also cause rebound headache problems.
5. Midrin-prescription medication used to treat both tension and migraine headaches; can cause drowsiness; not as effective as the triptans in relieving all the associated symptoms of migraine.
6. DHE-available as injection; IV; nasal spray; good option if quick relief needed or if triptans don't work.
7. NSAIDS-nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as Naproxen (Naprosyn; Anaprox; Aleve); Ibuprofen (Motrin)-can be prescription or OTC; may be helpful in some migraine headache patients; for many, will not give as effective relief as other options. Can cause stomach upset.

Address:  
PO Box 54726  
Irvine, CA 92619

Phone:(949) 861-8717  
Fax:(949) 861-8719  
Email: [drhutchinson@ocmigraine.org](mailto:drhutchinson@ocmigraine.org)  
[WWW.OCMIGRAINE.ORG](http://WWW.OCMIGRAINE.ORG)

The goal is to be headache free in 2 hours; have relief of any associated symptoms such as nausea; sensitivity to light; facial pain/pressure; neck pain; etc.; low chance of headache recurrence; little to no side-effects with the medication and return to full function. The new class of triptans is probably the best treatment option for the majority of migraine patients. Triptans are available by prescription only and include oral tablets; rapidly dissolving tablets; nasal sprays and injection. Ask your doctor if a triptan is right for you!

Prepared by:

Susan Hutchinson, M.D.

Director - Orange County Migraine & Headache Center

November 2007