



# MIGRAINE PATIENT TOOLKIT

Your Guide to Understanding & Managing Migraines



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# What is a Migraine?

Migraine is a severe, pulsating pain, usually on one side of the head, often accompanied by other symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light and sound.<sup>1</sup>

Not merely a 'bad headache' but a complex condition with attacks that can last from 4 to 72 hours.<sup>2</sup>



The condition can be so severe that some patients require hospitalisation to relieve their pain.<sup>3</sup>



## EPISODIC MIGRAINE



14 or fewer  
headache days  
a month<sup>2</sup>

## CHRONIC MIGRAINE



More than 15  
days of headache  
a month<sup>2</sup>

Understanding migraines is crucial to managing the condition effectively and improving quality of life.

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# Impact of Migraines

Globally, migraine affects 1 out of every 10 individuals.<sup>4</sup>



Lifetime prevalence in the Singapore general population is 8.2%.<sup>4</sup>



Mood and anxiety disorders are 2 to 10 times more common in migraineurs than in the general population.<sup>5</sup>



Malay ethnicity (versus Chinese) and female gender (versus male) are more likely to experience migraine headaches.<sup>4</sup>



The average age of onset for migraine in Singapore is 26.4 years.<sup>4</sup>



## Symptoms of Migraines

The primary symptom is a throbbing or pulsating pain on one side of the head.<sup>1</sup>



However, migraines can also cause nausea, vomiting, and extreme sensitivity to light, sound, and even certain smells.<sup>1,2</sup>



Some people may experience visual disturbances known as an 'aura' before a migraine attack. These can include seeing flashing lights, zigzag lines, or temporary loss of vision.<sup>1,2</sup>



Recognising these symptoms is the first step towards managing migraines effectively.

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# Risk-factors

Genetics - If a person has one parent who suffers from migraines, there's a 40% chance they will experience them too. This likelihood increases to 75% if both parents have migraines.<sup>6</sup>



Gender - Migraines are more common in adult women, who are three times as likely to experience them compared to men.<sup>6</sup>



Age - Migraines are most prevalent among individuals in their 50s. The frequency notably diminishes as people reach their 60s and 70s, and they are rarely found in those 80 years of age or older.<sup>6</sup>



Stressful life events<sup>7</sup>



Obesity<sup>7,8</sup>



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# Diagnosis & Treatment

Diagnosing migraines involves a thorough evaluation of symptoms and medical history.<sup>7</sup>

Healthcare professionals assess the frequency, intensity, timing, and type of pain, along with any additional symptoms, relieving and aggravating factors, family history, and medications taken for relief.<sup>1,7</sup>

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <br>Frequency                          | <br>Intensity        | <br>Timing                        |
| <br>Along with any additional symptoms | <br>Type of pain     | <br>Relieving                     |
| <br>Aggravating Factors              | <br>Family history | <br>Medication taken for relief |

Imaging studies like MRI or CT scans may be used to exclude other potential causes of headaches.<sup>7</sup>

Once diagnosed, a tailored treatment plan is developed. Migraine treatment can be categorised into preventive and relief medications.<sup>1,2,7</sup>

Preventive medications, taken daily, reduce the frequency and severity of attacks. They include CGRP inhibitors, beta-blockers, and antidepressants.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Relief medications, used to stop or reduce the intensity of an ongoing attack, include CGRP inhibitors, NSAIDs and triptans.<sup>1,2,7</sup>



# Living with Migraines

Managing migraines effectively requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses various aspects of daily life. Backed by credible doctors and healthcare professionals, the SMART strategy<sup>9</sup> offers a holistic way to manage migraines:

**S (Sleep):** Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule and ensuring 7-9 hours of good quality sleep each night can significantly impact migraine management. Relaxation therapies, meditation and yoga can help<sup>9</sup>



**M (Meals):** Eating meals punctually and not skipping meals is vital. Proper nutrition and staying hydrated can prevent triggers that lead to migraines. Avoid triggers like alcohol, dairy products, caffeine<sup>7,9,10</sup>



**A (Activity):** Staying active is essential for overall health and well-being. A recommended 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week can enhance circulation and reduce stress, both of which are beneficial in managing migraines.<sup>9,11</sup>



**R (Relaxation):** Mindfulness practices and relaxation techniques can help in stress reduction, a common trigger for migraines. Activities like meditation, deep breathing, or engaging in hobbies can promote relaxation and contribute to migraine prevention.<sup>9,10</sup>



**T (Triggers):** Triggers can vary widely among individuals, and not everyone will experience all of them. Keeping a migraine diary (See page 8 for a template) to track these triggers and working with healthcare providers to understand and avoid them can make a significant difference in migraine management<sup>9,10</sup>



Some of the triggers to avoid can include:



Stress<sup>7,9,12</sup>



Alcohol  
(especially red wine)<sup>9,11</sup>



Caffeine<sup>6</sup>



Dehydration<sup>9,11</sup>



Changes in  
sleeping patterns<sup>7,9,12</sup>



Poor diet<sup>6,11</sup>



Strong smells<sup>9,12</sup>



Bright lights<sup>9</sup>



Hormonal  
changes<sup>9,12</sup>



Medication<sup>7,11</sup>  
overuse



Weather changes<sup>9,12</sup>

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# Remember, you are not alone, and seeking help is always an option

**Workplace:** Clear communication with colleagues and supervisors about your condition can help manage work-related stress and responsibilities.<sup>13</sup>



**Family:** Open dialogue with family members about migraines can reduce stress and anxiety, fostering understanding and support.<sup>14,15</sup>



**Professional Help:** Consultation with healthcare providers for personalised treatment options is essential.



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# Migraine Diary

Keep track of essential details related to your migraines by filling in the following table everyday:

Week 1

| Symptoms  | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| How I feel<br>1 = Bad, 2= OK, 3 = Great                       |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Headache  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Migraine  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Intensity of migraine<br>1 = Mild, 2 = Moderate, 3 = Severe   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| <b>Body</b>   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Period  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Stress  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Slept badly   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Others  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| <b>Exercise</b>   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Exercised   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Meditation / Yoga   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Others  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| <b>Medication</b>   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Did it help?<br>1 = Not at all, 2 = Partly,<br>3 = Completely |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |

Keep track of essential details related to your migraines by filling in the following table everyday:

Week 2

| Symptoms  | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| How I feel<br>1 = Bad, 2= OK, 3 = Great                       |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Headache  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Migraine  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Intensity of migraine<br>1 = Mild, 2 = Moderate, 3 = Severe   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| <b>Body</b>   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Period  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Stress  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Slept badly   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Others  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| <b>Exercise</b>   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Exercised   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Meditation / Yoga   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Others  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| <b>Medication</b>   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Did it help?<br>1 = Not at all, 2 = Partly,<br>3 = Completely |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |

Keep track of essential details related to your migraines by filling in the following table everyday:

Week 3

| Symptoms  | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| How I feel<br>1 = Bad, 2= OK, 3 = Great                       |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Headache  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Migraine  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Intensity of migraine<br>1 = Mild, 2 = Moderate, 3 = Severe   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| <b>Body</b>   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Period  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Stress  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Slept badly   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Others  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| <b>Exercise</b>   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Exercised   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Meditation / Yoga   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Others  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| <b>Medication</b>   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Did it help?<br>1 = Not at all, 2 = Partly,<br>3 = Completely |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |



Keep track of essential details related to your migraines by filling in the following table everyday:

Week 4

| Symptoms  | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| How I feel<br>1 = Bad, 2= OK, 3 = Great                       |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Headache  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Migraine  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Intensity of migraine<br>1 = Mild, 2 = Moderate, 3 = Severe   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| <b>Body</b>   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Period  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Stress  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Slept badly   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Others  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| <b>Exercise</b>   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Exercised   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Meditation / Yoga   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Others  |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| <b>Medication</b>   |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |
| Did it help?<br>1 = Not at all, 2 = Partly,<br>3 = Completely |     |     |     |       |     |     |     |

Feel free to print additional copies of this table or use it as a guide to create a digital version. Regularly reviewing and sharing this diary with your healthcare provider can be instrumental in your migraine management journey.



# Medical Glossary



**Age of onset:** The age at which a person first experiences a particular condition or symptom.<sup>16</sup>



**Anxiety disorders:** Mental health disorders characterised by significant feelings of anxiety and fear, which may trigger migraines in some individuals.<sup>5,17</sup>



**Aura:** A warning sign of an impending migraine, often involving visual disturbances or other sensory changes.<sup>2,7</sup>



**CGRP Inhibitors:** Medications that target a specific protein involved in migraine attacks.<sup>18</sup>



**Computed Tomography (CT) Scan:** An imaging technique used to visualise the brain and rule out other causes of headaches.<sup>19</sup>



**Lifetime prevalence:** Proportion of participants who had ever received a diagnosis of a chronic condition by a clinician up to their age at interview (assessment).<sup>4</sup>



**Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI):** A medical imaging technique used to visualise detailed internal structures of the body, including the brain.<sup>7</sup>



**Migraine trigger:** Specific factors or conditions that may initiate a migraine attack.<sup>7</sup>



**Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs):** Over-the-counter medications used to reduce inflammation and pain.<sup>20</sup>



**Pulsating pain:** A throbbing or rhythmic pain, often associated with migraines.<sup>2,6</sup>



**Sensitivity:** Heightened response to stimuli, such as light or sound, often experienced during a migraine.<sup>12</sup>



**Triptans:** A class of medications used to treat migraines by targeting specific neurotransmitters.<sup>1</sup>

# Non-Medical Glossary



**Dehydration:** Lack of sufficient water in the body, a common migraine trigger.<sup>21</sup>



**Diet:** The kinds and amounts of food one habitually eats; certain foods may trigger migraines.<sup>22</sup>



**Migraine Diary:** A record of when migraines occur, including potential triggers and symptoms, to help identify patterns.<sup>7</sup>

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