

Caring for a Child with Migraine

Nothing hurts more than seeing your child in pain. Between 4% and 10% of children experience migraine, and kids display different symptoms than adults. Early diagnosis, an open dialogue and a specialized treatment plan can equip you and your child with the tools to best manage their migraine.



Symptoms in Children and Adults	Symptoms Specific to Children
Head Pain Dizziness Fatigue Nausea Sensitivity to light Sensitivity to sound	Pain Shorter attacks Abdominal pain Nausea and vomiting

Maintaining a Dialogue

An ongoing dialogue with your child is critical to getting an accurate diagnosis and finding a treatment plan that works. Your child's migraine management plan will evolve as they grow older and their daily routines change. Being able to talk about migraine openly will help you adapt as a team.

Find a common language. Younger children might have a hard time describing their symptoms. Use non-verbal cues, like pointing to your tummy or making pained facial expressions, to find out where and how severe their pain is.

Keep your focus on them. It can be scary when your child is having severe pain or other migraine symptoms, but kids will pick up on your anxiety and it can add to their stress. Put on a brave face and offer your child reassurance and empathy, and seek the consolation you need from your own support systems.

Work together on finding solutions. Involve your child in the process of finding a headache specialist and devising treatment plan. It can be as simple as asking them what they thought of a new doctor after a first meeting, or keeping track of healthy behaviors and rewarding them for practicing good headache hygiene.

Leave the migraine conversation open-ended. A diagnosis and treatment plan is only the beginning. Encourage your child to keep you informed about their symptoms, and invite any questions or concerns they have about their medication or daily routine. Then, work together to find alternatives, and get the whole family involved in following through.

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Treatment Options

Migraine in children can be treated in a variety of ways. Consult with a pediatrician or headache doctor before starting any pain or migraine management plan.

Healthy Habits

Establishing a healthy routine is essential for the migraine brain, so it's recommended that parents sit down with their children and discuss fundamental healthy habits.

Get enough sleep. Children should be sleeping a minimum of 9 hours a night while teenagers should get at least 8 hours.

Stick to a sleep schedule. Discourage your child from taking naps or staying up past their bedtime.

Drink enough water. A good rule of thumb is to drink eight 8-ounce glasses a day.

Eat consistent meal. Work with your child to make sure they don't skip breakfast and have access to three well-balanced meals a day.

Tip: Healthy habits aren't just for children and teenagers. Encourage your kids by walking the walk, and get the whole family to participate in practicing healthy habits. Track how much water each member of the family is drinking, sit down for dinner together every night and establish regular bedtimes for everyone.

Pharmacological Treatments

Preventive

Amitriptyline or Topiramate may be effective preventive treatment for children who experience frequent headaches.

Triptans

Triptans can be administered to adolescents and children. A doctor can determine if the medication is appropriate for your child's circumstances

Non-Pharmacological Treatments

Nutraceuticals

While nutraceuticals have been studied more extensively in adults, vitamins and minerals have demonstrated overall positive effects for children and adolescents living with migraine. Ask your doctor about Riboflavin (Vitamin B2).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy can help patients reframe the way they think about their migraine. It has proven to be highly effective for treating migraine in children. These therapies teach coping strategies, including:

- Pain management techniques to acutely reduce migraine pain
- Breathing techniques to reduce the severity and duration of the attack
- Reframing techniques to help patients move forward despite the pain

Example: "I feel really awful right now, I can't leave my bed." → "I feel really awful right now, but I want to see my friends and that's going to make me feel better."

Tip: Acupuncture and physical therapy can also help relieve pain, and have an added psychological benefit of empowering your child to take control of their migraine.

Finding a Headache Doctor

When it comes to caring for your child with migraine, you are not alone. A headache specialist plays a critical role in any migraine management strategy and can help you and your child explore your options and find an effective treatment plan. Visit americanmigrainefoundation.org to find a headache specialist near you to get your child the treatment and care they deserve.

AMERICAN  MIGRAINE
FOUNDATION

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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