



A Guide for Patients

understanding

MIGRAINE

# What Is Migraine?

Migraine is a disease that affects the brain and nerves.

More than **30 million adults** in the United States have migraine.

People with migraine can have symptoms like moderate-to-severe headaches, nausea, and sensitivity to light and sound.

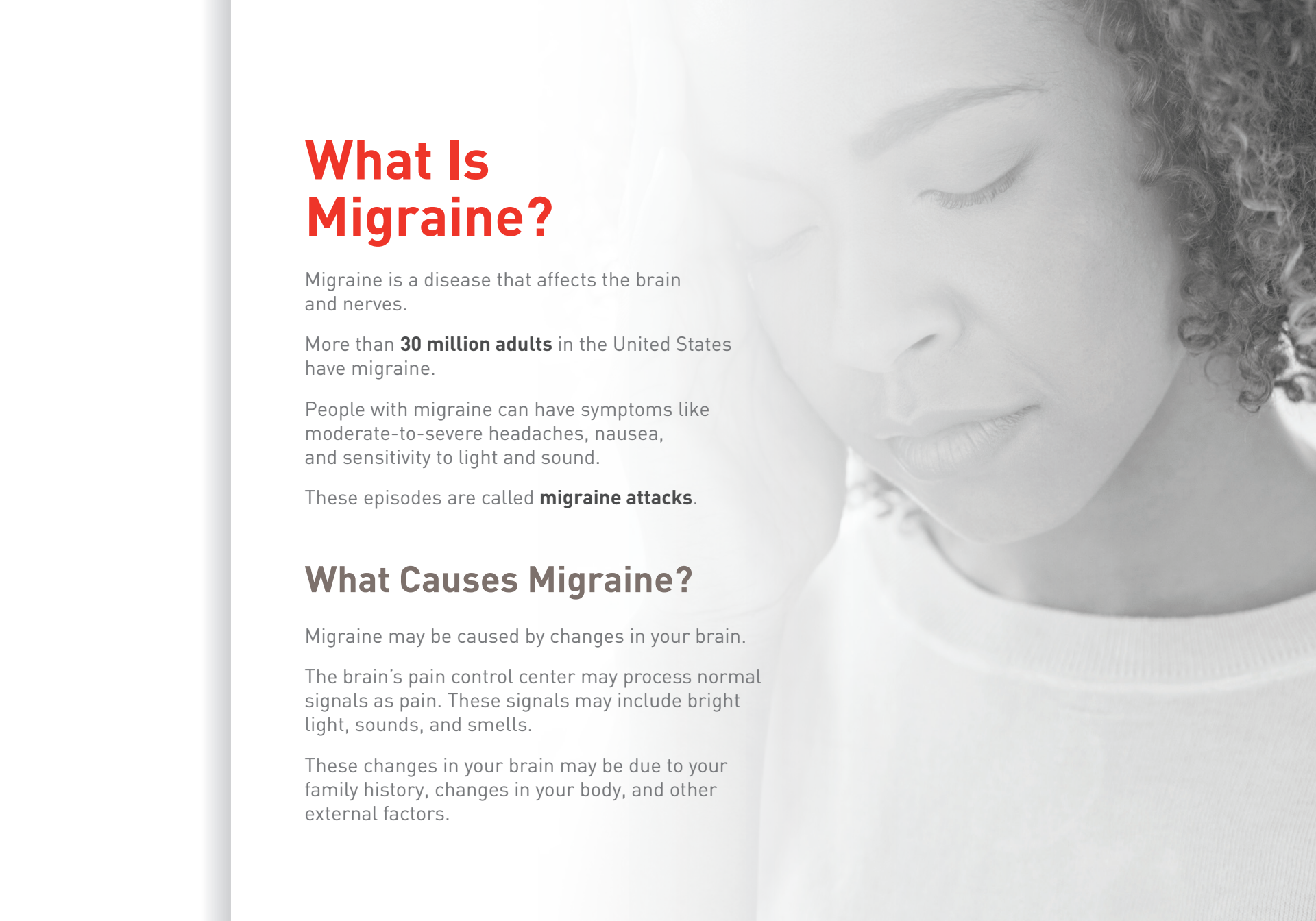
These episodes are called **migraine attacks**.

## What Causes Migraine?

Migraine may be caused by changes in your brain.

The brain's pain control center may process normal signals as pain. These signals may include bright light, sounds, and smells.

These changes in your brain may be due to your family history, changes in your body, and other external factors.



## What Do Migraine Attacks Feel Like?

A migraine attack may cause **pulsating pain** that usually starts on one side of your head. This feeling may spread to other parts of your head or neck.

- Migraine attacks can be very **painful**.
- The pain may last for **hours or days**.
- During an attack, you may **be nauseated, vomit, and be very sensitive to light and sound**.

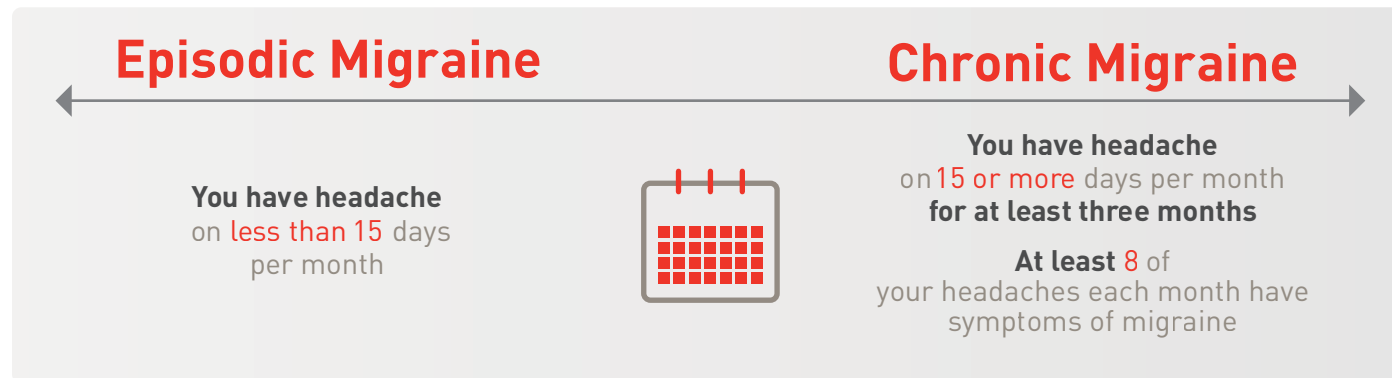
Your symptoms may change from day to day and even within the same day.

## How Often Do Migraine Attacks Occur?

Migraine attacks happen more often for some people than others. Some people have them only occasionally, while others may have attacks nearly every day.

You may hear **migraine** referred to as **episodic migraine** or **chronic migraine**.

Over time, you may move back and forth between having episodic migraine and chronic migraine.



# What Are the Phases of Migraine?

Migraine attacks are different for everyone who has them, but the symptoms tend to happen in **four main phases**, in the order shown below.

Not everyone has all of these symptoms. For example, only about one-third of people with migraine have the aura phase. Some people have symptoms from two or more phases at the same time.

## Symptoms

### 1 EARLY (PREMONITORY)

**Days to hours before the headache**

- Feeling tired all over
- Yawning repeatedly
- Having trouble concentrating
- Being sensitive to light or sound
- Having mood changes or feeling irritable
- Having food cravings
- Having a stiff neck

### 2 AURA

**Minutes to about an hour before the headache**

- Seeing zigzag lines or having blurry vision
- Feeling pins and needles on one side of your body, face, or tongue
- Feeling numbness
- Having trouble speaking
- Usually aura symptoms go away in about an hour

### 3 HEADACHE

**Lasting hours to days**

- Having throbbing pain on one side of head
- Having moderate or severe pain
- Feeling pain that worsens with movement
- Feeling nauseated or vomiting
- Being sensitive to light or sound

### 4 AFTER-HEADACHE (POSTDROME)

**Hours to days after the headache**

- Feeling tired all over
- Having trouble concentrating
- Having a stiff neck



# What Can Trigger a Migraine Attack?

Some people get a migraine attack during certain times, such as when they are hungry or tired. These factors are called **triggers**. Not everyone has triggers, and triggers may not be the same for everyone.

## SOME COMMON TRIGGERS INCLUDE:

- Changes in sleep habits
- Changes in weather
- Menstrual period
- Stress
- Hunger
- Eating certain foods
- Alcohol
- Smoking
- Dehydration
- Overuse of some medicines

Learning your own triggers may play an important role in managing migraine. Migraine attacks may still occur, even while avoiding known triggers.



# What Helps With Migraine?

There are ways that might help make your migraine attacks less frequent or severe. You can do some things to help **relieve your symptoms after a migraine attack has started** (acute management). You can try some other things that may help **reduce the number of migraine attacks** you have (preventive management).

## During a Migraine Attack

**You can try things that may help reduce migraine symptoms.**

- Apply a cool or warm cloth to your head or neck.
- Go to a dark, quiet room and lie down.
- Over-the-counter or prescription medicine.
- Other pain relief options may include:
  - Relaxation
  - Biofeedback as a method of learning to control your symptoms by monitoring them

## Make a plan:

**Work with your healthcare provider to develop a migraine management plan that may help reduce the effect of your migraine attacks.**

## Before a Migraine Attack

**You can make changes in your everyday life that may help.**

- Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- Eat on a regular schedule.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Limit how much coffee, black tea, or cola you drink. These have caffeine.
- Make time to do things that you find relaxing.
- Cognitive behavioral therapy may lower stress and perception of pain.
- Prescription medicine.

# How Can You Talk About Migraine?

## WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER:

Keep a **migraine journal**. It is a valuable tool for you and your healthcare provider.

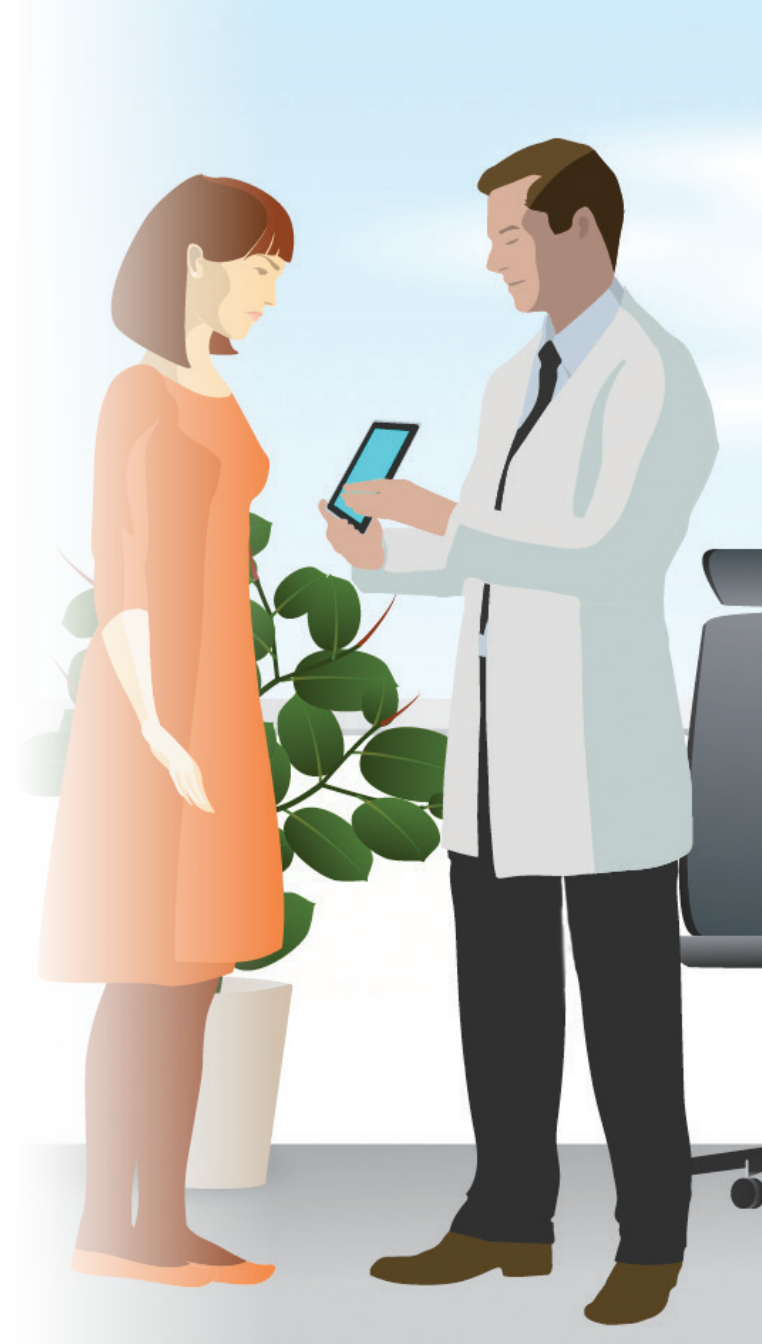
### Here are some things you may want to track in your journal:

- ✓ How often do you have migraine attacks?
- ✓ How long do your migraine attacks last?
- ✓ What kind of symptoms do you have during a migraine attack?
- ✓ Have you noticed things that trigger your migraine attacks?
- ✓ What seems to help relieve your symptoms?

## WITH FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND COWORKERS:

You may want to talk to some people about your migraine attacks. Here are some facts you can share about migraine:

- **Migraine is more than a bad headache.** Migraine is a disease that affects the brain and nerves. Migraine includes many symptoms, not just headache.
- **Migraine is more than just pain.** There are symptoms other than pain during a migraine attack. People can experience sensitivity to light and sound, zigzag lines or bright flashing lights in their vision, fatigue, nausea, or vomiting.
- **Migraine attacks feel different for different people.** Symptoms and severity can be different from person to person and individually from one migraine attack to the next migraine attack.



## Watch a Video

Scan the QR code on the right to watch an informative video about migraine. Please use your phone's camera to capture the QR code. Once the code is scanned, your device will display a pop-up box that you can then select to take you to the video.

## Resources

The groups listed below offer more information and help for migraine.

**American Academy of Neurology  
Brain & Life**  
[brainandlife.org](http://brainandlife.org)

**American Migraine Foundation**  
[americanmigrainefoundation.org](http://americanmigrainefoundation.org)

**Coalition For Headache And Migraine Patients (CHAMP)**  
[headachemigraine.org](http://headachemigraine.org)

**Migraine Again**  
[migraineagain.com](http://migraineagain.com)

**Miles for Migraine**  
[milesformigraine.org](http://milesformigraine.org)

**National Headache Foundation**  
[headaches.org](http://headaches.org)

**National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke**  
[ninds.nih.gov](http://ninds.nih.gov)

