

**Diagnosis**

- Consider migraine in any patient presenting with episodic disabling headache.
- Patients with episodic disabling headache superimposed on a background of daily or near daily headache are likely to have chronic migraine.
- Always ask about acute medication use. If required for more than 2 days a week consider whether there may be medication overuse headache. Headache diaries can help.



**Acute therapy**

Avoid opiates and restrict acute medication to 2 days a week

- Simple analgesics: aspirin 900 mg or ibuprofen 400–600 mg
- Triptans:
  - sumatriptan 50–100 mg is first choice
  - all oral triptans are gastrically absorbed, so may not work if the patient is vomiting
  - triptans only work once headache starts
  - general efficacy is to work for 2 out of 3 attacks.

Early or persistent vomiting?

No response?

- Add antiemetic: metoclopramide 10 mg or prochlorperazine 10 mg
- Consider nasal zolmitriptan or subcutaneous sumatriptan.

- Try other triptans
- Try triptan and NSAID combinations.

**Lifestyle advice**

For patients with migraine, maintaining a regular routine is important, including the following:

- Encourage regular meals, adequate hydration with water, sleep and exercise
- Avoid specific triggers if known
- Consider activities that encourage relaxation such as mindfulness, yoga or meditation.



**Preventative therapy**

- Consider if migraine is disabling and reducing quality of life, eg frequent attacks (>1 per week on average) or prolonged severe attacks.
- Which medication to try first depends on patient comorbidities, other health issues, drug interactions and patient preference.
- Anticonvulsants should be avoided in women who may become pregnant.
- Start at low dose and gradually increase according to efficacy and tolerability.
- Good response is a 50% reduction in severity and frequency of attacks.
- Treatment failure is a lack of response to the highest tolerated dose used for 3 months.



**Therapies**

- Propranolol: target dose 80 mg twice a day
- Topiramate: target dose 50 mg twice a day (use if propranolol fails)
- Amitriptyline/other TCA: target dose 30–50 mg at night
- Candesartan: target dose 16 mg daily



**Other options**

- Sodium valproate: target dose 600 mg twice a day (avoid in women who may become pregnant)
- Pizotifen: target dose 3–4.5 mg (lacking evidence, but widely used)



**Referral to neurology/headache clinic**

Consider referral if three or more therapies have failed.

**Withdrawal**

If the patient responds well to prophylactic treatment a trial of gradual drug withdrawal should be considered after six months to one year.

