



THE MATER
WELLBEING CENTRE

HEADACHE DISORDERS



About Primary Headache Disorders

Primary headache disorders, such as Tension-Type Headaches, Migraine and Cluster Headaches are transient, non-fatal and non-contagious disorders that cause a significant amount of burden worldwide.

Tension type headaches are the most common, that feel like a dull ache with constant pressure around the front, top and sides of the head as if a rubber band has been stretched around it.

Migraine are less common but more burdensome than tension type headache. They are described as an especially sharp and throbbing pain on one or both sides of the head.

Cluster headaches are rare but are described as an excruciatingly painful sensation around one eye. Cluster headaches were given their name because they are believed happen in clusters for a month or two at a time around the same time of year.

Chronic Headache

These headache disorders range across a spectrum of severity from episodic to chronic headache types. Chronic daily headache is any headache that occurs on 15 days of the month or more and lasts at least four hours. A chronic headache can greatly impact on an individual's family life, social life and work life.

The aim for any person that experiences headache disorder, in particular chronic headache disorders, should be to learn more about their condition, find the most suitable treatment options for them and work towards living better with this condition and reducing the number of days experiencing headaches and related symptoms.

Using a diary to learn about and manage your headache There are different diagnoses within each headache disorder such as in migraine i.e. migraine without aura, migraine with aura and hemiplegic migraine. There are a unique range of symptoms and experiences in these headache disorders including difficulties with as sight, smell, sound, touch, and physical sensations like hemiplegia, allodynia and nausea. There can also be a range of triggers including lifestyle,

environmental or dietary factors in 48 hours preceding the attack, which can differ from one person to another.

Using a daily headache diary for several months is one of the best ways to learn about and manage headache disorders. It is useful to measure

- ▶ headache pain score
- ▶ symptoms
- ▶ medication
- ▶ time taken until headache relief
- ▶ possible triggers in the last 48 hours



A daily headache diary is available on the Migraine Association of Ireland website or alternatively here <https://migraine.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Download-a-Migraine-Diary-here.pdf>.

Managing headache triggers: stress, sleep and emotions Stress, sleep and emotions are some of the most commonly reported triggers for headache disorders. Headaches have a significant genetic component, however we can learn to manage these triggers to help reduce headache frequency and live better with these conditions. A number of strategies to help manage these triggers include but are not limited to

- ▶ Psychotherapy
- ▶ Biofeedback
- ▶ Chronic disease self-management programme
- ▶ Mindfulness-based stress reduction
- ▶ Improving sleep hygiene
- ▶ Acupuncture
- ▶ Yoga
- ▶ Family support
- ▶ Lifestyle changes
- ▶ Group meet ups



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