



CARING FOR YOUR HEADACHE DISORDER CARING FOR MIGRAINE: FACTS AND MYTHS

Our mission is to improve the lives of migraine patients and their families and ultimately help find a cure.

Myth: Migraine disease is rare in childhood.

Fact:

Migraine affects about 4% of children. Before puberty, boys and girls are usually affected equally. After puberty, girls are affected about 3 times more than boys. By age 17, as many as 8% of boys and 23% of girls have had a migraine.

Fact:

Childhood headache disorders in general occur more often than asthma. One study of 11-year-old children found that 20% of the children had migraine but only 13% of them had asthma.

Myth: Migraine is hereditary and there is nothing you can do about it.

Fact:

The link between heredity and migraine is unclear. One study estimated 50% risk of migraine for the child whose parent(s) has migraine.

Fact:

There are several known risk factors for migraine in children and adolescents. Unhealthy lifestyles including high BMI-Body Mass Index, low physical activity, and cigarette smoking may increase the risk for migraine attacks. One study of adolescents with migraine compared teens who attended a weight-loss program to those who did not lose weight. Those who lost more weight had fewer migraine attacks.

Myth: Children can “outgrow” migraine.

Fact:

Migraine attacks are chronic. Almost half of the people who get migraine as children will continue to have migraine attacks as adults. About one quarter of people who have migraine as children are migraine-free at 25 years of age.

Myth: Most migraine attacks are triggered by food.

Fact:

Foods such chocolate, cheese, caffeine, nitrites (hot dog) and MSG (monosodium glutamate found in Chinese/Hispanic cooking) are generally not strong triggers.

Myth: Diagnosing migraine in children requires tests.

Fact:

There is no laboratory (blood or urine) test that can diagnose migraine.

Fact:

An EEG is not recommended by the medical professional organizations.

Fact:

A brain MRI cannot be used to diagnose or treat migraine. In one study, one third of young patients with migraine had an MRI done and only 6% were abnormal. The abnormalities were not related to migraine and noted by chance.