

When migraine turns



Migraine is a leading cause of disability in the United States. For a subset of people who have it, migraine can develop into a chronic condition, causing even more frequent pain, discomfort, and disruption to daily life.

What is chronic migraine?

Migraine attacks are headaches with migraine characteristics (such as dizziness, nausea, and intense pain that gets worse with activity) that last 4 to 72 hours. Chronic migraine develops over time as these headaches become increasingly frequent. Chronic migraine is defined as a history of 15 or more headache days a month for at least three months with at least eight headache days each month that include migraine symptoms (though for many people with chronic migraine the number of headache days fluctuates from month to month).

How does migraine become chronic?

Factors that can make it more likely for migraine to become chronic include:

- Ineffective treatment
- Overuse of certain medications (for migraine and other conditions)
- Certain medical conditions (such as anxiety, sleep disorders, and chronic pain conditions)
- Stressful life events

Did you know?

In 2010, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the **first treatment specifically for chronic migraine**.

Botulinum toxin A, an injectable treatment best known for smoothing wrinkles and fine lines, remains one of the few FDA-approved treatments for adults with chronic migraine.

What is the impact?

Migraine can interfere with work, school, and social life, but chronic migraine makes it even harder to participate in activities and to maintain relationships with friends and family. People with chronic migraine are also more likely to have other health conditions such as chronic pain, arthritis, and depression.

What is the outlook?

There's no cure for migraine or for chronic migraine, but there are ways to find relief. It's important for people with chronic migraine to:

- Work with a health care professional to find the right approach
- Address symptoms as soon as they appear
- Identify migraine triggers and avoid them

With the right treatment plan, many people with chronic migraine can have a better quality of life with fewer and less severe symptoms. ■

About **7.7%** of all people diagnosed with migraine have chronic migraine.

SOURCE: THE AMERICAN MIGRAINE PREVALENCE AND PREVENTION STUDY

Features of migraine and chronic migraine

MIGRAINE

0 to 14

Headache frequency

0 to 14 days per month

Diagnosis

At least 5 migraine attacks over the course of a lifetime

CHRONIC MIGRAINE

**15
or more**

Headache frequency

15 or more days per month

Diagnosis

A history of 15 or more headache days for more than 3 months, at least 8 with migraine characteristics

MIGRAINE SYMPTOMS AND CHARACTERISTICS

- Headache pain on one side
- Pulsating feeling
- Moderate to severe pain intensity
- Pain that gets worse with physical activity
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Sensitivity to lights, sounds, or smells

SOURCE: International Classification of Headache Disorders, 3rd edition