



Topic

Persistent Chronic Migraine Symptoms Between Attacks

Title & Organization

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Migraine is a brain disease with symptoms of head pain; sensitivity to light, sound and smell; nausea and/or vomiting; allodynia; confusion; and aphasia.
- An individual can have migraine symptoms even after the headache phase of an attack has passed, and/or before the next headache phase has begun.
- Brain imaging shows changes in the physiology of individuals with chronic versus episodic migraine. People with chronic migraine have a lower threshold for pain and for potential migraine triggers.
- The longer you have chronic migraine, the harder it is to get out of it. But it's important not to lose hope, as reversal is possible.
- Preventive and acute treatment, plus lifestyle factors (movement, mindfulness, meditation and nutraceuticals) are all important in reversing from chronic to episodic migraine.
- To break a migraine attack, it's important to treat early and to use an adequate dose of acute medication. This is, however, often not possible for individuals with chronic migraine, as frequent use of acute medication can lead to medication overuse headache.
- Medication overuse headache can, in turn, change some of the initial headache characteristics, thereby making a correct diagnosis more difficult.

QUOTES

“But if you have 15 days of headache a month, even the minimum chronic migraine — and we understand that a migraine attack could go on for 72 hours untreated — sooner or later, those every-other-day headaches are blending into each other.”

“And maybe it's the beginning of one, the middle of one, the end of another one. And you don't necessarily fully recover in between, and you've got those interictal symptoms going on.”

“And so, one of the things we're sort of putting more thought into now is, ‘What is going on in between those headache attacks?’ Because it's not just the migraine day when you're disabled by head pain and light and sound and feeling unwell; the next day, the headache might be gone, but you still don't feel great. You're still sensitive to sound. You're sensitive to light.”

“Migraine is a brain disease, and it impacts many different aspects of our brain and how we function. And so, an individual whose head pain is gone, still can have lingering symptoms in between.”

TREATMENTS CITED

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| Antidepressants | Monoclonal antibodies |
| Blood pressure medications | Nutraceuticals |
| Exercise | OnabotulinumtoxinA |
| Meditation | Stress management |
| Mindfulness | Triptans |

PRACTICAL STEPS

- Consider a simple green, yellow, red indication on your calendar to indicate mild, moderate, or severe headache days.
- Engage with your health care provider and ask for an effective preventive treatment above all else.
- Let people in your life know how migraine affects your everyday life.
- Because exercise initiates changes in the brain that help prevent migraine, it is vital to develop an exercise plan that works for you.