

- Speaker 1: Your whole body is tense and then the tympani, the drums come and they start. And they can start slow and the absolute pounding, pounding, pounding.
- Speaker 2: It is like an icepick through my brain.
- Speaker 3: It's just a sharp, stabbing feeling that nothing you do is going to take it away.
- Speaker 4: Like someone's inflating a balloon inside. Like it almost pushes my eye out and it's just like pressing a pin right onto the nerve in the back of my head.
- Speaker 5: Migraines are more than severe, intense headaches. Symptoms can include nausea and vomiting, sensitivity to light and sound, and even temporary loss of vision. But half of those who have migraines don't know that their headaches are migraines, and more than half have never seen a medical professional for a diagnosis. This is important, because while migraines can't be cured, they can be managed. Knowing more can be the start of getting your life back.
- Cheryl B.: A migraine is a severe type of headache disorder. Up to 40 million Americans have migraines, so it's a very common condition. There are two types of migraine headache, episodic, which occurs less than 15 days per months, and chronic migraine, which occurs on 15 or more days per month. It's important to seek help if you have chronic migraine because this can progress and become worse over time.
- Untreated, migraine headaches can last for 4 to 72 hours. Migraine is caused by different chemicals that cause a headache attack. We think of chemicals as being good chemicals, which protect against pain, and bad chemicals, which make people feel pain. When you have a migraine, the balance of the chemicals can cause you to feel this pain and different things can trigger those bad chemicals to increase and cause a migraine attack. Migraines are also genetic, so if you have one or two parents with migraines, it's likely you will have migraines as well and that's something to consider with your children.
- Speaker 5: The effects of migraines go well beyond the physical symptoms. You're dealing with the uncertainty, the fear of never knowing when it will hit you. And your friends and family, your spouse, are all affected as well. You need their support and understanding.
- Speaker 1: If I had the migraines that I've had for the last year, I would not be able to work. My son lives in Seattle and I have three grandsons, so I spend a lot of time with them. But when you really are suffering this, you can't go there, you can't do any of your daily routines.
- Speaker 4: It doesn't have much effect work but it definitely has an effect on social things. I mean, it's light but it's also sound. Yeah, if we're ever going to be going out to a bar or I had concert tickets one time and I didn't go.
- Speaker 2: I've had probably two days in the last four years that I didn't have a migraine at all, for the majority of the day. Dealing with my pain has really taught me to set these realistic, manageable goals. So I do feel like my pain really controls what I'm able to do, because I

have these really strict physical limitations, where I just can not push myself past a certain point.

Speaker 5: So how can you improve your life, in spite of migraines? It helps to know their pattern. Migraines progress through four stages, though you may not experience them all.

Cheryl B.: The first phase of a migraine is called the pro-drome, up to 60% of patients will recognize a pro-drome. These are unusual symptoms that can occur days before the headache attack that might alert you that a headache is coming on. Some symptoms might include fatigue, dizziness, neck pain, different types of sensations or cravings, even excessive yawning. So if you experience one of these symptoms and you can associate with a migraine, you might know that a headache attack is coming on.

Speaker 3: It's almost like a sixth sense, that I feel like one's coming on. That I know, I'm like, "Oh, this is going to happen. Okay." So you try and take the necessary steps to try and prevent it or make it less as possible. Sometimes they don't help, sometimes you have just no power over how bad it's going to be, it's just going to be a bad one so live with it.

Cheryl B.: The second phase of the migraine attack is called the aura, about 20 to 30% of people will have an aura before their migraine. Auras are usually visual symptoms, so they can describe kind of shiny lights in their visual field, blind spots, zigzag lines, but there are other types of auras. Some people will describe tingling on one side of their body or even difficulty speaking. Most people will have the aura and then experience a headache about 20 to 30 minutes after, but some people will have an aura without a headache.

Speaker 2: Occasionally, my vision will get sort of wavy. I don't have the thing where it's like a kaleidoscope, I don't see the triangles or anything, but it will get a little bit wavy or my depth perception will just completely go, which is very interesting. And then I will have these physical effects, where it's sort of like a stroke-like almost feeling, where my face will go numb and then the other half of my body will go numb and it's very difficult to coordinate.

Cheryl B.: The attack phase is the third phase of a migraine, it's associated with severe pain. It can be one-sided or both sides of the head, it can start in the neck and extend behind the eye. The pain is usually severe and will make patients want to stop their activity and lie down, so it's very disruptive.

And then there are other associated symptoms. People will say that movement hurts, there's throbbing sensations in their head, they might experience nausea and vomiting. Light and sound, which are normally not bothersome, become painful and patients just want to lie still during the headache attack. If untreated, the pain can last from 4 to 72 hours, so it can be very disruptive to everyday life.

Speaker 4: The pain in the back of my head, once it's actually going, like my migraine is full bore, is like someone turning up a dial and it's about every minute, like the pain. And it is

lessened if I'm in a dark area or if it's quiet and things like that, but it never really goes away.

Speaker 2: It's kind of like I can always feel it in my head, just a little like something in there. And it sits right on the right side of my head and it'll sort of grow and spike out. And then when I know it's going to be really bad is when it actually moves to the other side, it'll move to the left and that's when I know my whole day is gone.

Cheryl B.: The fourth phase of the migraine attack is called the post-drome, this occurs for about a day after the pain is resolved. Patients report feeling fatigued and washed out, sometimes they report dizziness or moodiness. This can be quite disabling and, again, can signify that while the headache is gone, they're still experiencing migraine symptoms.

Speaker 1: There are some days when you actually have the full migraine and then there are other days after that where it's lessening, but it never completely goes away. And so that's why I call it my shadow, because it's still here. It's just like walking down the street and you see your shadow when it's a sunny day. But it's always here and it's never going away, it's sort of like taunting me.

Speaker 3: When they're bad though, it's bad, I'm out for almost an entire day. I have to go in a dark room, close the door, no noise. And then I'll wake up the next day, it'll be lessened but it will still be there. So it's like a two- to three-day process to completely, for me at least, to not feel the after effects of a migraine.

Speaker 5: While more research needs to be done on the causes of migraines, some trigger factors seem to spark an onset. Triggers can influence an attack up to 48 hours before the headache comes on.

Cheryl B.: Usually everyday things in life can become triggers for a headache attack. Sometimes it's easy to tell what your trigger is and sometimes you just don't know. One of the most common triggers is stress, up to 70% of patients will identify stress as a trigger. So it's important to think about a healthy lifestyle that can reduce stress. Things like different foods, skipped meals, smoking, hormonal changes, even the weather, can affect migraines. Some of these things obviously we can control. If you keep a headache diary, you may be able to identify your triggers and then reduce some of them and reduce the number of headaches you have.

Speaker 2: It took me a really long time to identify a lot of my triggers. Some of them are more immediate, so I know that if I'm around flashing lights, especially slowly flashing lights, it just makes my migraine worse immediately. These strong, artificial perfumes, like in a lot of deodorants and cleaning products, perfume specifically.

Speaker 4: I almost always have some asthma issue when I'm having a migraine. But changes in the barometric pressure, like it there's a huge storm front that comes through. But I really have noticed it doesn't happen in the winter, it doesn't happen in the summer.

- Speaker 3: I know one of my main triggers for any of my migraines is food-related. Anything with heavy nitrates, I've learned, poorly processed lunch meats, unfortunately bacon. So any sort of those really processed, low-quality, like the cheaper meats that I would eat in college because that's what I could afford.
- Speaker 1: A pain from something else, like my knee, just the stress or the pain of that seems to just go right in and start a headache and then that just blows up into the migraine. The different smells and flowers right now are very triggering. Sometimes it would be light, bright lights. Very loud sounds really make me cringe and they can just roll into anything.
- Speaker 5: It only makes sense to try to avoid your triggers. It also makes sense to build a real partnership with your health care team. The ACPA Migraine Conversation Guide, available on the ACPA website and as a phone app, can help you track symptoms and triggers. The tool shows your migraine experiences graphically, over time, and makes it easier to discuss them with your health care provider. Then you and your provider can identify areas where you can act to reduce the number and severity of your migraines.
- Cheryl B.: There are excellent treatments for migraines, some of them you can get at your drugstore and can be quite effective. Over-the-counter medications, like Excedrin or Motrin, if used infrequently can be effective treatments for milder migraines. Some of the new research is looking at ways to prevent chronic migraine. There are treatments which target some of the bad chemicals in your body, which may be causing your headaches, and these are very exciting because we can reduce the number of headaches that patients are experiencing.
- Speaker 5: There are steps you can take to help yourself. Medication or yoga can reduce stress, exercise increases endorphins that can reduce suffering. Also helpful, foods high in magnesium, CoQ10, riboflavin, and melatonin. And keeping a consistent, daily schedule with regular meals also seems to have a positive effect.
- Speaker 2: Regular exercise used to be a big help for me and it's definitely one of the things where I try to stay as active as I am able to. Taking care of myself, in general, making sure that I get enough sleep, that I'm eating good quality food, that I'm being as active as my body and my migraine will allow me to.
- Speaker 4: Mostly what I'll do is I'll take the decongestant pretty much as often as I can, I think it's like a six-hour, eight-hour, and I'll take those pretty much for the next several days after I have a migraine. I would say also hydrating, like I really try to drink a lot of tea and things like that.
- Speaker 3: I think my physical activity is very helpful to my migraine management. I think it lets me feel like I have sort of a control over my body. The regiment of going to the gym or making a different meal rather than chicken nuggets, if I'm making a more well-balanced meal it's kind of helped me feel like I have control of what I'm doing. I think I feel pretty confident that once a month I can handle, if that's the rest of my life, I can handle once a month.

Speaker 1: Pull on patience, encourage and strength. Get it from tother people or other pieces of art or whatever it is that I have, and that really, really helps because it keeps you on top. So anyone who does have migraines really needs a support group to get them started, to help them understand these things when they don't have a migraine, to practice these things when you don't have a migraine so that you're ready.

Speaker 5: Migraines can throw your life off track, leaving you feeling out of control, at the mercy of your headaches. But with the support of your healthcare team, you can learn skills and strategies that will help you to reduce your suffering and improve your quality of life. Get involved in your care, it's the first step to getting your life back.