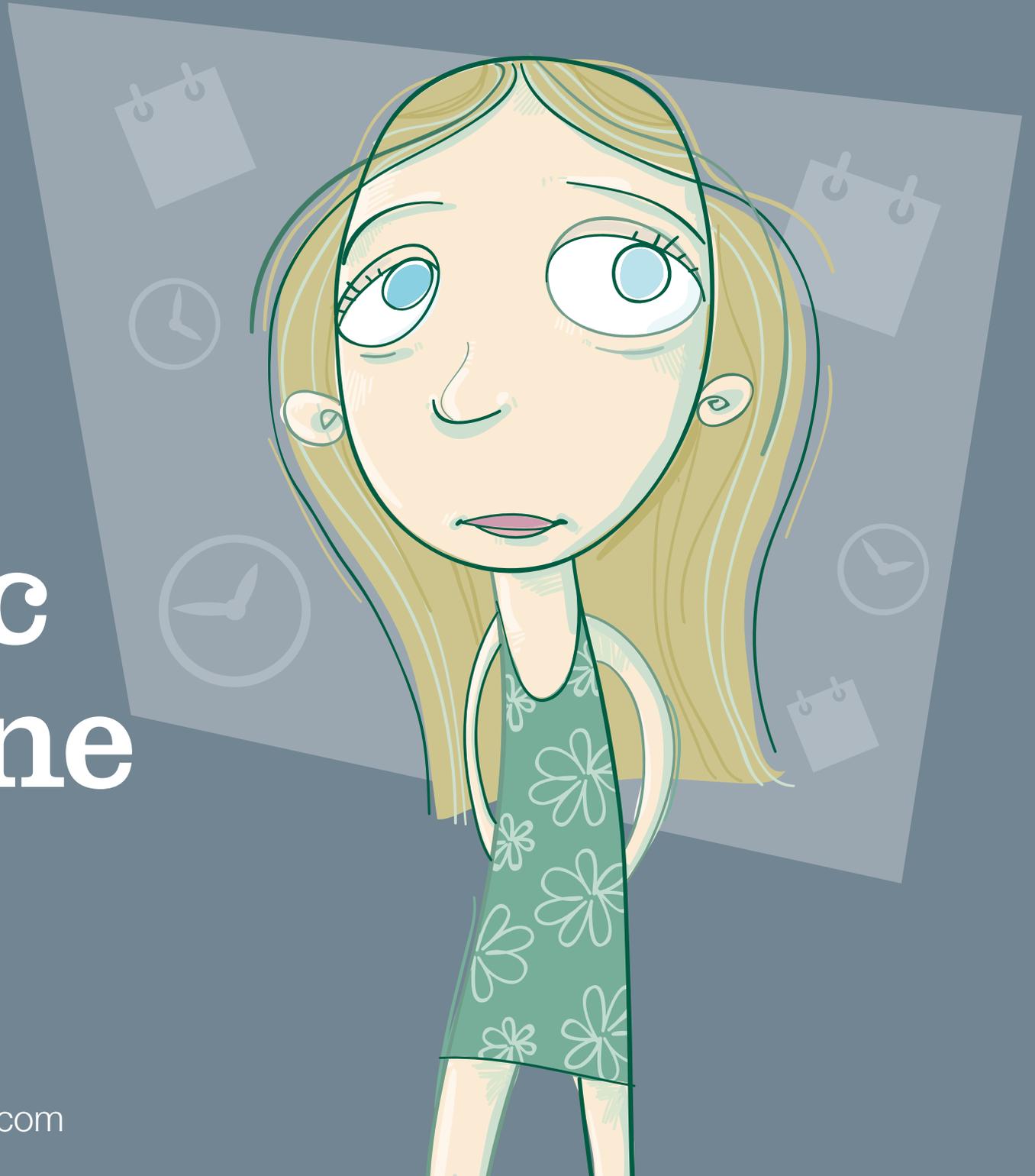




Migraine.com

UNDERSTANDING

Chronic Migraine



A patient guide from Migraine.com



It is our goal to create the best and largest online community of experts and patients dedicated exclusively to migraines. On the following pages you will find excerpts from Migraine.com. Visit the site for more in-depth articles, expert advice, online tools, forums, and more.

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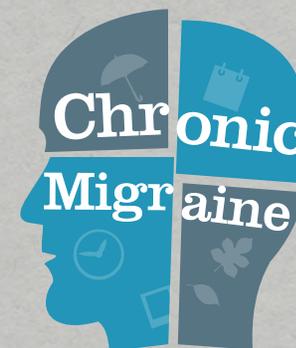
Introduction to chronic migraine

In the United States, there are more than 37 million people who have migraines. Of those, it's estimated that between two and three million of them have chronic migraine.¹

What is chronic migraine?

In the simplest of terms, chronic migraine (CM) is having migraines or tension-type headaches 15 or more days a month, lasting at least four hours if not treated.

You can find further information on chronic migraine, as well as tools, forums, and more on [Migraine.com](https://www.migraine.com).



Further reading

View our Special Report on chronic migraine on [Migraine.com](https://www.migraine.com) for additional information and discussion on migraine triggers.

¹ Natoli, JL; Manack, A; Dean, B; Butler, Q; Turkel, CC; Stovner, L.; and Lipton, R.B. "[Global prevalence of chronic migraine: A systematic Review](#)." *Cephalalgia* 2010;**30**: 599. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2982.2009.01941.x.

Living with chronic migraine

Chronic migraines make it difficult to carry on with your life, and they make it difficult to stay positive and keep working toward a better treatment regimen.

It took time, perseverance, and more patience than I ever thought I could muster to get through that period of time, but I did get through it. Here are some recommendations I'd like to offer to those with chronic migraine:

- **Don't give up.** Many of my recommendations will come back to this one. For most of us, if we give up, it's over. Our families and friends can't know how we're feeling, make doctor's appointments for us, and do the work for us. Neither can our doctors. It's up to us to keep fighting and working with our doctors as treatment partners as we look for effective migraine management. Nobody can do that for us.

About the author

As a result of debilitating migraines and failed medical care, **Teri Robert** hit the Internet looking for information in the late 1990's. That was the beginning of a new career for Teri, that of a patient educator and advocate.

Teri is a member of the International Headache Society, the National Headache Foundation, Mental Health America, the National Patient Advocate Foundation and other organizations.

Teri is a regular contributor to the Migraine.com blog.

Living with chronic migraine

- **Identify your migraine triggers.** It can be difficult to identify triggers when migraines are chronic or daily, but it's still worth it. If you find that some of your triggers are avoidable, you may be able to reduce the number of migraines you have.
- **Be an active treatment partner.** Nobody knows our bodies like we do. I was recently at a conference where the statement was made that during a doctor's visit, there are two experts in the room. The doctor is a medical expert, and the patient is an expert on their body. We can't be passive about our treatment; we must be active participants. Chronic migraine can wear us down, but we have to stay involved in our care and treatment. We need to actively discuss our options with our doctors so that they're making decisions WITH us, not FOR us.



More on triggers

View our Special Report on migraine triggers on [Migraine.com](https://www.migraine.com) for additional information and discussion on migraine triggers.

Living with chronic migraine

- **Start and use a Migraine diary or journal.** It's important to record when we have a migraine, what the trigger may have been, what medications we took for it, our pain and disability levels, and other information. Diaries can reveal patterns and other information that can be helpful in refining our migraine management regimen. Take a look at our journal on Migraine.com
- **Continue learning about your Migraines.** Knowledge is empowering. Understanding our migraines (and any other health issues we have) helps us work better with our doctors. We can't call our doctors every time we have a migraine. We have to make some treatment decisions, such as when to take what medications, ourselves. To make good decisions, it's important to understand our migraines. And, here's a bonus – Studies



Did you know?

Overusing headache medications—even when it's “just” over-the-counter medications like Tylenol or Excedrin—can cause medication overuse headaches. Medication overuse headaches typically don't respond to taking more medication.

Living with chronic migraine

have shown that patients who are [educated](#) about their conditions have better treatment outcomes.

- **Try new [treatments](#) with a positive attitude.** In psychology, there's a principle called "self-fulfilling prophecy," which essentially means that if we enter a situation thinking it's going to go a certain way, it most likely will. It's an excellent demonstration of the power of our minds, and it can apply to our treatments. For example, if we focus on the potential side effects of a medication we're going to try, certain that we're going to have those side effects, we most likely will. Our minds will produce the side effects even if the medication doesn't. Certainly, we should be aware of the potential side effects and negative impacts of any treatment we're going to try, but we need to remember that they're potential, not certain, and maintain a positive attitude.

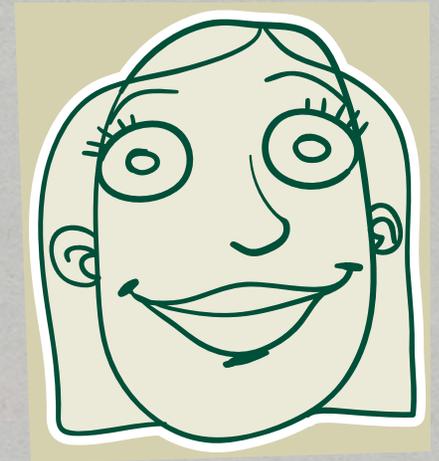


stories

Learn how others manage their migraine triggers - in their own words. Migraine stories on [Migraine.com](https://www.migraine.com).

Living with chronic migraine

- **Ask your doctor to rule out idiopathic intracranial hypertension.** Idiopathic intracranial hypertension (IIH), aka pseudotumor cerebri, is a disorder caused by poor absorption of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), resulting in high CFS pressure. It can trigger migraines, so if your migraines are frequent, and you can't identify your triggers, it's worth asking your doctor to rule out IIH. It's important to know that the only way to definitively rule out or diagnose IIH is with a lumbar puncture (spinal tap). Some people with IIH will show papilledema (swelling of the optic nerves), but not all do.
- **Don't hesitate to ask questions.** When you see your doctor or another member of your health care team, ask any questions you may have about migraines, your treatment, or related issues.



Did you know?

Over time, your headache pattern can change, and those treatments that were once effective may no longer work for you.

Living with chronic migraine

- Don't give up. Yes, it all comes back to this one. When trying a new [preventive medication](#), remember that it can take up to three months to know if it's going to help, so don't give up on it too soon. If several preventive medications haven't worked, don't give up hope. There are now over 100 medications in use for migraine prevention, making it pretty much impossible to have tried everything. It would take more than 25 years to give each of those medications a fair trial.



Did you know?

Subscribe to the *Migraine.com weekly* and receive the latest migraine news and headlines, right in your inbox. Subscribe on Migraine.com.

Further reading

Migraines and Social Security

<http://migraine.com/migraine-basics/chronic-migraines-and-applying-for-social-security-disability/>

The Family Medical Leave Act & Migraine

<https://migraine.com/migraine-basics/family-medical-leave-act-migraine/>

Botox Approval for Chronic Migraine

<https://migraine.com/blog/botox-approval-for-chronic-migraine-what-does-this-mean/>

Surgery for Chronic Migraine

<https://migraine.com/blog/news/migraine-surgery-new-technique-developed-for-chronic-sufferers/>

Nerve Stimulation for Chronic Migraine

<https://migraine.com/blog/news/nerve-stimulator-study-shows-potential-benefit-for-chronic-migraine/>

Don't forget...

Sometimes treatments stop working because you have other health problems causing symptoms that also need to be treated. Headache is one of the most common symptoms for medical conditions and can be caused by infections, anemia, hormone problems, autoimmune problems, and others. If your treatments stop working or you have tried a few standard migraine therapies and they really don't make a difference, see your doctor for a complete physical to make sure nothing else is going on.

Learn more on Migraine.com.

Keeping a migraine journal

Understanding your migraine triggers are an important part of treating your migraines. If you're having trouble identifying your migraine triggers, ask your doctor to help you. While not all triggers are avoidable, it's helpful to identify and eliminate those that are.

The best way to learn your migraine triggers is to build your own personal migraine triggers list. To develop your list, you must first keep a migraine journal that lists detailed information on each and every migraine attack. You'll be able to notice a pattern once you start writing down when your migraines occur, what you were doing before each attack, how long the attack lasts and information on your symptoms.



Did you know?

Try the Migraine.com
Migraine Meter - our online
journal for recording all of
your symptoms, triggers,
treatments and more.
Find it on [Migraine.com](https://www.migraine.com).

Talking to your doctor

If you have migraine symptoms that keep returning, discuss them with your primary care doctor or a headache specialist. Preparing in advance will help you make the most of your visit.

Be prepared

If possible, answer the following questions before your visit:

How often do migraines occur?

What other symptoms do you have?

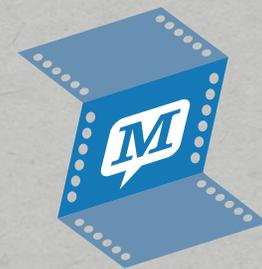
Have any migraine triggers or causes have been identified?

Have you suffered any head injuries?

Are you taking any medications?

When did the migraine symptoms first begin?

Does anyone else in your immediate family suffer from migraines?



report

Did you know?

When you use the Migraine Meter, your migraine information can be printed or shared in a report for your doctor. Find it on Migraine.com.