

What causes Migraine Headaches?

MIGRAINE headaches seem to be caused in part by changes in the level of a body chemical called serotonin. Serotonin plays many roles in the body, and it can have an effect on the blood vessels. When serotonin levels are high, blood vessels constrict (shrink). When serotonin levels fall, the blood vessels dilate (swell). This swelling can cause pain or other problems. Many things can affect the level of serotonin in your body, including your level of blood sugar, certain foods and changes in your estrogen level if you're a woman.

Are there different kinds of migraine headaches?

Yes. The most common are classic migraine and common migraine.

Classic migraines start with a warning sign, called an aura. The aura often involves changes in the way you see. You may see flashing lights and colors. You may temporarily lose some of your vision, such as your side vision.

You may also feel a strange prickly or burning sensation, or have muscle weakness on one side of your body. You may have trouble communicating. You may also feel depressed, irritable and restless.

Auras last about 15 to 30 minutes. Head pain usually follows the aura, though sometimes the pain and aura overlap, or the pain never occurs. The head pain of classic migraines may occur on one side of your head or on both sides.

Co m m o n migraines don't start with an aura. Common

migraines may start more slowly than classic migraines, last longer and interfere more with daily activities. The pain of common migraines may be on only one side of your head.

Migraines may last from 4 to 72 hours. They may happen only once or twice a year, or as often as daily.

What things may set off a migraine?

Certain things that may contribute to migraines include the following:

Possible symptoms of migraines

- Intense throbbing or dull aching pain on one side of your head or both sides.
- Nausea or vomiting
- Changes in how you see, including blurred vision or blind spots
- Being bothered by light, noise or odors
- Feeling tired and/or confused
- Stopped-up nose
- Feeling cold or sweaty
- Stiff or tender neck
- Light-headedness
- Tender scalp

