



## Migraines: More Than Just A Headache

(NAPSA)—What are migraine headaches? What are the symptoms? What causes them? And, most importantly, what prevents them? A common type of chronic headache, migraines affect six out of every 100 people—about 17 million Americans.

More common among women, migraines usually strike people between the ages of 10 and 60. Migraine headaches are usually accompanied by throbbing, pulsating pain on the left, right or both sides of the head, and the pains are either severe or dull. Depending on the severity of the attacks, these headaches usually last six to 48 hours.

Even though symptoms of migraine headaches vary from person to person, there are still some common symptoms that are evident in most migraine cases. These may include nausea, vomiting, blurred vision, sensitivity to sound and light, and a tingling sensation. Severe migraines may incapacitate a person.

While migraine is most often inherited genetically, many researchers are taking a closer look at the changes in the brain and blood vessels occurring with migraines. Some believe that changes in brain activity cause the nervous system to respond. This leads to inflamed blood vessels and nerves around the brain, which can result in a migraine.

Environmental factors can also trigger migraines to flare up, such as specific noise pitches, lighting situations, weather and high altitudes. In addition, flare-ups can be instigated by physical factors and eating habits. These include too much sleep or too little sleep; stress; certain foods containing monosodium glutamate (MSG), such as seasoning salts and sauces; and foods containing high levels of nitrates, such as sausage, hot dogs and smoked fish.

Migraines may also be associated with gender. For instance, many women have migraine attacks linked to their menstrual cycles. In these cases, fluctuating estrogen levels are believed to play a role. Fortunately, this type of migraine tends to decrease in frequency with age.

In an effort to gather as much



**Osteopathic physicians can help people manage their migraine headaches.**

information as possible about migraine, the American Osteopathic Association, which represents more than 47,000 osteopathic physicians, joined six other national physician organizations to form the U.S. Headache Consortium. The group developed a set of practice guidelines for physicians to use when diagnosing and treating patients who suffer from migraines.

Although a cure for migraines has yet to be found, those suffering from this condition do not have to live with the pain. One way to overcome these chronic headaches is to learn how to manage them. This generally consists of drug therapy and lifestyle management. There are many migraine drugs available, but it is important that you find one that is best for your migraine condition.

Adjusting your lifestyle to avoid environmental elements that can trigger migraine headaches, such as dusty rooms, bad lighting, humid areas and noise levels, may also help to decrease the likelihood of attacks.

With proper knowledge about migraines and a physician's care, the frequency and severity of migraine attacks may decrease dramatically—allowing you to live your life more comfortably.

Osteopathic physicians (D.O.s) are fully licensed physicians able to prescribe medication and perform surgery. They treat people, not just symptoms.

To learn more about D.O.s and osteopathic medicine, visit the American Osteopathic Association's Web site at [www.aoa-net.org](http://www.aoa-net.org) or call toll-free 1-800-621-1773.