

# Using Supplements to Manage your Migraine

Reading this handout can help you learn what supplements to take for your migraine pain, how much to take and where to find them.

If you have any questions, please speak with your health care provider.



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## What is a migraine?

A migraine is a moderate to severe headache that can last 4 hours to 3 days. It can have a pulsating or heartbeat quality to it and is usually felt on one side of the head. A migraine can cause nausea (feel like throwing up) and sensitivity to light and sound.

Doing everyday physical activities such as walking up stairs can sometimes make a migraine worse, resulting in disability at home and at work.

**Migraines are the 3rd most common disease. About 12% to 16% of people in the world suffer from migraines.**

## Aura

Some people experience aura before or during a migraine. Aura may involve seeing spots, feeling tingling, and having trouble finding the right word. Aura symptoms last about 5 minutes and are completely reversible.

## What is a chronic migraine?

People with chronic migraine have at least 15 headache days a month for 3 months, with most of the headaches being migraine headaches.

## What is a 'medication overuse' headache?

Medication overuse headache means using over-the-counter pain medicine such as Tylenol, Advil or Aspirin, or prescribed medicine such as Sumatriptan or Cambia more than **10 to 15 days a month**. Taking this much pain medicine can cause more headaches to develop.

If you are having more headaches and need pain medicine, talk to your health care provider about managing your headaches.

## Risk factors

Certain risk factors make it more likely that you will have migraines. Some factors can be changed and some cannot.

Things you can change:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obesity</li><li>• Taking too much medication</li><li>• Having too much caffeine</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stressful life events</li><li>• Sleep disorders (such as sleep apnea)</li><li>• Depression and anxiety</li></ul>
Things you cannot change:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Frequent headaches</li><li>• Sex (women are more likely to have migraines)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Head trauma</li><li>• Family history</li></ul>

## Tell us what you're taking!

We're interested! Always tell your health care provider if you are using vitamins, minerals or other alternative therapies. Even if they come from nature, many of these substances can have side effects or even cause reactions with your migraine medications.

Your health care provider needs to know which substance improved your migraines and which caused side effects. Most migraine treatments may take up to 3 months to show a benefit.



### **Important: If you are pregnant**

If you are pregnant or thinking of getting pregnant, please talk to your health care provider before taking any supplements. Ask about the most up-to-date advice for pregnant women who want to take supplements.

## Supplements that can help treat migraines

Supplements that have been shown to relieve migraines include:

- Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin)
- Coenzyme Q10
- Magnesium Citrate
- Melatonin

**Before taking any of the supplements listed in this guide, talk to your health care provider.**

### Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin)



- Vitamin B2 restores your energy
- Take 400 mg every morning. Vitamin B2 works best if you take it just before you exercise.
- If taking 400 mg in the morning is not working, try taking 200 mg in the morning and 200 mg in the evening.
- You can buy it online at [www.well.ca](http://www.well.ca) (about \$11-\$13 for 1 month's supply)

### Things to watch for:

- Urine may turn dark yellow
- You may need to pee more often
- You may have loose bowel movements (watery poo)
- It may take 3 months before you see an improvement

## Coenzyme Q10



- Coenzyme Q10 restores your energy
- Take 300 mg every morning. It works best if you take it just before you exercise.
- If taking 300 mg in the morning is not working, try taking 100 mg in the morning, at noon and in the evening.
- You can buy it online at [www.well.ca](http://www.well.ca) (about \$25–\$30 for 1 month's supply)

### Things to watch for:

- It may take 3 months before you see an improvement
- Research has not always shown that coenzyme Q10 helps with migraines. But it is felt to be very safe so adults and children can try it after talking to their health care provider.

## Magnesium Citrate



- Magnesium citrate may help reduce migraines by making the brain less excitable.
- Try magnesium especially if you have migraine with aura.
- Take 150 mg at bedtime. You can be take up to 600 mg at bedtime but start to increase the dose slowly. Too much magnesium can cause upset stomach and diarrhea.
- Many people find taking magnesium helps to calm them. Using it at bedtime may help with sleep.
- You can buy it online at [www.well.ca](http://www.well.ca) (about \$20 for 100 pills)

## Magnesium Citrate (continued)

### Things to watch for:

- It may take 3 months before you see an improvement
- Talk to your health care provider first before taking magnesium if you:
  - have kidney disease or kidney problems
  - are taking other medications such as thyroid medication mycophenolate or some antibiotics

## Melatonin



- Melatonin can also help with your sleep!
- Take 3 mg in the evening.
- It is best to take Melatonin in the evening after dark to match your body's natural rhythm
- You can buy it online at [www.well.ca](http://www.well.ca) (about \$12-\$13 for 1 month's supply of pills)

### Things to watch for:

- Melatonin works best if you have good sleep habits and keep your room dark after taking it
- Research has not always shown that melatonin helps with migraines. But it is felt to be very safe so adults can try it after talking to their health care provider.