

Facts about migraine in children and young people



1 in 10 children suffer from migraine

When is it migraine?

With headaches or abdominal pain which:

Disrupt normal activities

May be associated with other symptoms

Occur in defined episodes

Do not come and go during the attack

and the child is completely normal between attacks....

....it is likely to be migraine and it is appropriate to seek advice from your GP.

- Many children will experience occasional headaches with around 70% of school children having a headache at least once a year
- 10% of school children suffer from migraine
- 2.75 million school days are missed each year due to migraine
- Children with migraine often describe their headache as “just sore” (rather than throbbing) and in the middle of the forehead (rather than on the side of the head, as is commonly the case in adults)
- A migraine headache may also be accompanied by:

Increased sensitivity to light, sound and / or smells	Abdominal pain
Aches, pains and excessive tiredness	Dizziness
‘Aura’ - neurological symptoms such as visual disturbances, confusion, numbness or pins and needles	Nausea and / or vomiting

- A migraine attack in children may last for as little as an hour but can be as long as three days and they are symptom free between attacks
- The frequency of attacks varies between 2 - 3 attacks per year and 2 - 3 attacks per week, but the average is one per month

- Around half of all migraineurs will have had their first attack by the age of 12 years
- Migraine has been reported in infants as young as four months; in these cases it has been recognised by the sudden, short-lived paralysis of eye muscles, face or one of the limbs, which draws attention to the onset of an attack
- Migraine occurs equally in both sexes up to the age of 12 years, after which it becomes more common in girls as they often experience their first attack around puberty
- The terms migraine equivalents and variants are used to describe forms of migraine where headache is less prominent and other migraine symptoms are more prominent. There are three different types of migraine equivalents: **abdominal migraine**, **cyclical vomiting syndrome** and **benign paroxysmal vertigo**
- 20% of children with migraine can experience aura symptoms (visual disturbances). It is a common misconception that aura symptoms are a prerequisite for a diagnosis of migraine. This is untrue; migraine without aura is more common
- In at least 4% of children, the predominant symptom of migraine is recurrent abdominal pain, possibly without headache, or the headache is mild. In the absence of headache the condition may easily go unrecognised
- 90% of children with migraine will feel nauseous and 60% will vomit
- Migraine is triggered by a huge variety of factors not just cheese, chocolate and red wine! A common trigger in children and young people is dehydration
- There is a genetic predisposition to migraine so a family history of the condition can aid diagnosis. However, this is not always the case
- It is very rare for brain tumours to be present with a history of headache, without other neurological signs and symptoms

For further information about migraine in children and young people including information packs for parents and carers, teachers and school nurses, please call **08456 011 033**, email info@migraine.org.uk or visit www.migraine.org.uk/young-people.

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