

Non-drug Treatments for Migraine

There are many reasons why people cannot use drugs to treat their migraines: they have trouble tolerating them, want to avoid their side effects, are allergic to them, are non-compliant, pregnant, or have some underlying medical condition that might worsen. Or maybe the drugs just don't work. Sometimes sufferers want to explore alternatives to taking drugs to see if they can get relief before searching for the magic pill. These treatments are mostly free or low cost and could also be used to enhance the effect of drug treatments. Whatever the reason, there are many non-drug alternatives to try.

Non-drug treatments include lifestyle advice and therapies.

Lifestyle Advice

- See a doctor for a *proper diagnosis*. Migraine is a diagnosis of exclusion, which means doctors must eliminate other reasons for your symptoms before arriving at a migraine diagnosis. So don't self-diagnose. If your symptoms are bad enough for you to be evaluating treatments, you should make sure you actually have migraines and not something else.
- Keep a detailed *headache diary* so that you can analyze patterns to learn your *headache triggers*. Once you've identified your triggers, do what you can to *avoid* them.
- Stick to the *same schedule* every day – even on the weekends. Don't skip meals or change sleep patterns.
- Drink lots of water to *stay hydrated*. Dehydration is a common migraine trigger.
- *Exercise* regularly.
- Keep your *weight down*. An increase in BMI (body mass index) may result in an increase in the frequency of migraines.

Therapies

- Physical therapy
- Acupuncture
- Massage
- Stress Management/Relaxation techniques, including Yoga, breathing, visualization, Tai Chi, meditation
- Biofeedback
- Hypnotherapy
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy