

Headache Treatment

Now that I'm trying to get pregnant, what can I do when I get a headache?

Acute migraine medications are used to treat severe migraine episodes. Regularly using acute medications more than two days per week can worsen your headaches and result in medication overuse or rebound headaches. Let your doctor know if you are using or need to use acute medication more than two days per week.

When you get a migraine, remember the following principles:

- Start with non-drug treatments.
- Don't take medication for mild headaches.
 - When you take a medication, use only medications recommended by your doctor and use the recommended dose.
- If nausea occurs with your migraine, ask your doctor for recommendations to treat and reduce nausea.

When you get a mild migraine:

- Apply heat or ice (whichever you find more soothing) for 20 minutes to your temples or neck.
- Begin relaxation techniques: deep breathing, imagery, or biofeedback.
- Use acupressure techniques (described in *What non-drug treatments are effective for treating headaches?* handout).
- Include positive messages about good expectations.
- Do oscillatory movements (described in *Headache-reducing exercises* handout).
- Perform exercises that stretch your painful area. Be sure to stretch slowly, and only to the point of first feeling a stretching sensation.
- Use distraction techniques.
- Don't give up—combining and repeating these techniques is usually helpful.

When you get a moderate migraine:

- Use those techniques for mild migraine.
- If non-drug treatments haven't worked, use acetaminophen.
- Treat nausea with non-drug therapies and, if necessary, medications (See *What can I do if I'm feeling nauseated during my pregnancy* handout.)

When you get a severe migraine:

- Use the tools for mild plus moderate migraine.
- If acetaminophen and non-drug treatments haven't worked, talk to your doctor about other treatments, such as benadryl, lidocaine nasal spray, or a mild narcotic.
- If possible, going to sleep can turn off a severe migraine.

Keep track of your headaches in diaries and bring completed diaries to your next visit to see how well your treatment is working. Mark when you get a headache, how bad it was on a 1–10 scale, whether you had significant nausea with it, and how well your treatments worked.

Do not use any additional over-the-counter, supplement, or prescription drugs without first talking with your healthcare provider.