

# Headache Toolbox: Causes, Prevention, and Treatment Strategies for Migraines



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Migraines are a debilitating neurological condition that can disrupt daily life, relationships, and well-being. Over time, recurring migraines may also increase the risk of cognitive decline. From identifying triggers to exploring treatment options and lifestyle changes, this guide provides effective strategies that can help you manage migraines and regain a pain-free life.

## What Causes Migraines?

The causes of migraines are not fully understood. However, sources may include a combination of genetic, lifestyle, and environmental factors. Some key contributors include:

### Genetic predisposition

Family history can play a significant role in migraine susceptibility.



### Stress and sleep disturbances

Prolonged stress and irregular sleep patterns can trigger and intensify migraines.



### Medication overuse

Excessive use of pain relievers may lead to rebound headaches, worsening migraine frequency.



## How to Treat Migraines

### Medication Options

For those experiencing frequent migraines, preventive medications can help reduce the number and severity of episodes. Common preventive options include:

- **Beta-blockers, antidepressants, and anti-seizure medications:** These medications, often prescribed for other conditions, have shown effectiveness in reducing migraine frequency.
- **Hormonal treatments for women:** Women are three times more likely to be affected by migraines. Birth control or hormone replacement therapy may help manage migraines related to hormonal changes.

Each individual responds differently to medications, so working closely with a healthcare professional to find the right balance is critical.

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## Lifestyle Changes

Adopting healthy lifestyle habits is one of the most effective strategies to manage migraines. Key changes include:

### Regular exercise

Activities like yoga, swimming or walking help reduce stress and maintain healthy blood flow.



### Balanced diet

Avoiding caffeine, alcohol and processed foods and emphasizing nutrient-rich foods such as vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains help reduce migraine frequency.



### Sleep hygiene

Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule and limiting screen time before bed can help prevent migraines related to poor sleep.



### Hydration & relaxation

Proper hydration and techniques like meditation or deep breathing can support migraine prevention.



## Tracking and Managing Triggers

Migraines can stem from a range of environmental and lifestyle triggers, including:

- Bright lights, strong smells, and loud noises.
- Stress, sleep disruptions, and hormonal changes.
- Dietary choices that include processed foods, caffeine and alcohol.

Using a migraine diary to track patterns and pinpoint personal triggers is a helpful strategy. Once identified, avoiding or minimizing exposure to these triggers can be highly effective.

**Managing stress levels** is especially essential for reducing both the frequency and severity of migraines. Effective stress management strategies include:

- Mindfulness meditation, deep breathing, and progressive muscle relaxation.
- Cognitive-behavioral therapy which provides tools to cope with stressors.

## Building a Personalized Migraine Management Plan

Addressing migraines requires a comprehensive approach that combines medication, lifestyle changes, and preventive strategies. By understanding personal triggers, prioritizing a healthy lifestyle, and managing stress effectively, individuals can reduce the impact of migraines on their lives.

Consultation with health care providers to personalize treatment options, track progress, and adjust strategies as needed is essential to effective migraine management.

To make an appointment with a Loyola Medicine provider, call **888-584-7888** or schedule an appointment online: **Loyola Medicine**



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Learn more at [loyolamedicine.org/migraines](https://loyolamedicine.org/migraines)



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