



Calderdale and Huddersfield

NHS Foundation Trust

Patient Information Leaflet

SDEC Patient Information – Migraine

Diagnosis: Migraine

Following your visit to the Same Day Emergency Centre, you have been diagnosed with a migraine.

A migraine is a type of headache that can cause moderate to very severe pain and may be associated with other symptoms such as feeling sick or being sensitive to light.

What is a Migraine?

A migraine is a condition that affects the brain and causes repeated headaches.

Unlike a usual headache, migraine pain is often:

- Throbbing or pulsing
- Felt on one side of the head (but can be both sides)
- Severe enough to interfere with normal daily activities

A migraine can last from a few hours to several days. Some people get warning symptoms before a migraine starts, known as an aura, such as flashing lights, zigzag lines, or numbness in the face or arm.

What Causes a Migraine?

The exact cause of migraines is not fully understood. They are thought to be related to changes in chemicals, nerves, and blood vessels in the brain.

Migraines can be triggered by certain factors. Common triggers include:

- Stress or anxiety
- Poor or irregular sleep
- Skipping meals or dehydration
- Bright lights, flickering screen or loud noises
- Strong smells
- Hormonal changes (for example around periods, pregnancy, or menopause)
- Certain foods (such as chocolate, cheese, or processed foods)
- Alcohol, especially red wine
- Some sleeping tablets, Combined contraceptive Pill, Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), Medication overuse

Not everyone has the same triggers.

Risk Factors – Who is More Likely to Get Migraines?

You may be more likely to experience migraines if you:

- Have a family history of migraines
- Are female (migraines are more common in women)
- Are aged between teens and middle age
- Have stress, anxiety, or depression
- Have irregular sleep patterns

What Tests or Investigations Are Needed?

Migraine is usually diagnosed based on your symptoms and medical history.

However, further tests may be arranged if:

- Your headaches are new and severe
- The pattern of your headaches has changed
- You have neurological symptoms (such as weakness, confusion, or ongoing visual problems)

Possible investigations may include:

- Blood tests
- A CT or MRI scan of the brain

What Are the Treatment Options for Migraine?

Treatment aims to reduce pain, shorten the attack, and prevent future migraines.

1. Pain relief (Paracetamol, Ibuprofen)

Benefit: reduces pain

Risk: stomach irritation, overuse headaches

Triptans (e.g. Sumatriptan)

Benefit: migraine-specific, effective early

Risk: tight chest feeling, not for some heart patients

Anti-sickness medication (e.g. Metoclopramide)

Benefit: helps nausea, improves absorption

Risk: drowsiness

Preventive drug treatment (if frequent)

Examples: Propranolol, Amitriptyline, Topiramate

Benefit: fewer attacks

Risk: varies (fatigue, dizziness)

Lifestyle Measures

These can help prevent migraines:

- Regular meals and good hydration
- Good sleep routine
- Regular exercise
- Managing stress
- Avoiding known triggers
- Keeping a headache diary is very important to see if there are any patterns to your migraines. This can be a paper diary or an online version.

What Complications Should I Be Aware Of?

Most migraines are not dangerous. However, complications can include:

- Frequent migraines affecting work or quality of life
- Overuse of painkillers leading to “rebound” headaches
- Rarely, severe migraine symptoms mimicking a stroke

When Should I Seek Help Urgently?

Call 999 or go to A&E immediately if you experience:

- Sudden, severe headache described as the “worst ever”
- Weakness on one side of the body
- Difficulty speaking or understanding speech
- Loss of consciousness
- New visual loss that does not improve

Who Should I Contact for Other Concerns?

Contact the Same Day Emergency Centre (SDEC) if you:

- Are unsure about your medication
- Are confused about your diagnosis
- Have worsening or frequent migraines

Contact Your GP if you:

- Continue to have migraines despite treatment
- Need a medication review
- Have side effects from prescribed medication

Contact information

If you have concerns after leaving SDEC, please contact:

SDEC / Hospital Advice Line: _____

GP: _____

Out of hours: NHS 111

In an emergency, call 999.