



**University  
Hospitals Sussex**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Headache Clinic information and preparation

Headache service

Patient information

## Getting the most out of your appointment

Migraine is a condition that presents with a range of symptoms and patterns. Many people with migraine are successfully treated by their GP. However, in addition, your neurology service can provide more specialist help if:

- there is doubt about the diagnosis
- your attacks are getting worse
- you have not responded to treatments
- you would like to understand more about your condition
- you might benefit from procedures or treatments not available from your GP.

## Going to the doctor to talk about migraine can be difficult

**You may feel:**

- that the doctor thinks your condition is not significant (compared to the life threatening diseases he or she may be treating)
- that your doctor is not interested, because he or she just gives you drug after drug
- embarrassed because you have to keep going back time and time again (there is never a 'cure')
- that your doctor cannot do anything for you.

## Common questions

The first time you visit your specialist to talk about your headaches, he or she will probably want to know:

- details of your headaches and any other symptoms
- what aggravates the headache
- how often you have attacks
- what brings them on
- when you started having these symptoms (days, months, years ago)
- if there is anyone else in your family who gets similar headaches
- what treatments you have tried, including the doses and how long you took them. **Your GP surgery can print a list for you.**

## To get the most out of your appointment, try to:

- give your doctor as much information as possible about your condition. It usually helps to keep and bring along a headache diary (enclosed to New patients),
- to write some information or questions down before the appointment.
- keep a record of the impact your migraines are having on your life, both during and in between attacks. The doctor will only understand how disabling the condition is if you tell him or her.
- remember that migraine is a very individual condition. There is a wide range of treatment options available, and with perseverance you will hopefully find the right one for you.

Many people with migraine get the condition for years – migraine is a ‘long-term condition’. Many doctors will appreciate patients who ask questions, give feedback, provide information, and try to self-manage their condition.

## Why keep a headache diary?

Recording details of your migraine attacks or headache can be useful.

### It can help:

- your doctor make a diagnosis
- you recognise triggers and warning signs
- assess whether your acute or preventive medication is working
- show any patterns to attacks.

A headache diary can include information on a range of things; however, it is best to keep it simple and record basic information. You can also use an app or similar on your phone.

### We provide a headache diary that requires basic information but diaries can include:

- date, day of the week
- duration (how long the attack lasted)
- severity (how bad the attack was). This can either be recorded as mild, moderate or severe. Or on a scale from 1-10, where 10 is the worst pain you can imagine

- other symptoms you experience alongside the headache such as dizziness, vertigo, sensitivity to light, sound, smells or any symptoms that affect your movement (e.g. numbness)
- medication you currently take, including the doses
- anything else that may be helpful, such as side effects from medication, any potential triggers, your period, any changes in medication, and anything else that may be helpful.

## Past medications

| Medicine | Maximum dose tried | How long taken | Reason discontinued |
|----------|--------------------|----------------|---------------------|
|          |                    |                |                     |
|          |                    |                |                     |
|          |                    |                |                     |
|          |                    |                |                     |
|          |                    |                |                     |

## What happens next?

After your visit the clinic will write to your GP to tell them about any treatment that has been suggested and keep them informed of any progress you make.

## Useful information

### The Migraine Trust Helpline

**0808 8020066** (Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm)

**Remember that migraine is a very individual condition. There is a wide range of treatment options available, and with perseverance you will hopefully find the right one for you.**

Adapted from information produced by The Migraine Trust [www.migrainetrust.org](http://www.migrainetrust.org)

This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath

Ref. number: 2115  
 Publication date: 06/2022  
 Review date: 06/2025

© University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust Disclaimer:  
 The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.