NEUROLOGY GROUP of BERGEN COUNTY

Migraine Headaches

A migraine can cause severe throbbing pain or a pulsing sensation, usually on just one side of the head, and often accompanied by nausea, vomiting, and extreme sensitivity to light and sound. Migraine episodes typically last for a few hours but, may last for as long as three days and can sometimes be disabling. Some people have warning symptoms known as aura before or with the headache. This may consist of flashes of light, blind spots, or tingling on one side of the face, arm or leg. Migraines often begin in childhood, adolescence or early adulthood.

Medications can help prevent some migraines and make them less painful. Talk to your physician about different migraine treatment options. The right medicines, combined with self-help remedies and lifestyle changes, may help. If you regularly experience signs and symptoms of migraine attacks, keep a record of your attacks and how you treat them. Then make an appointment with your physician to discuss your headaches.

STAGES OF MIGRAINES:

Migraines often progress through four stages: prodrome, aura, attack and post-drome, although everyone does not experience all stages.

Prodrome

One or two days before a migraine, people sometimes notice subtle changes that warn of an upcoming migraine, including:

- Constipation
- Mood changes, from depression to euphoria
- Food cravings
- Neck stiffness
- Increased thirst and urination
- Frequent yawning

Aura

An aura may occur before or during migraines. Only about 20% of people experience an aura with their migraines. Auras are symptoms of the nervous system. They are usually visual disturbances, such as flashes of light or wavy, zigzag vision. Sometimes auras can also be touching sensations (sensory), movement (motor) or speech (verbal) disturbances. Each of these symptoms usually begins gradually, builds up over several minutes and lasts for 20 to 60 minutes. Examples of migraine aura include:

- Visual phenomena, such as seeing various shapes, bright spots or flashes of light
- Vision loss

- Pins and needles sensations in an arm or leg
- Weakness or numbness in the face or one side of the body
- Difficulty speaking
- Hearing noises or music
- Uncontrollable jerking or other movements

Sometimes, a migraine with aura may be associated with limb weakness (a phenomena called "hemiplegic migraine").

Attack

A migraine usually lasts from 4 to 72 hours if left untreated. The frequency with which headaches occur varies from person to person. Migraines may be rare, or strike several times a month. During a migraine, a person may experience:

- Pain on one side or both sides of the head
- Pain that feels throbbing or pulsing • Sensitivity to light, sounds, and sometimes smells and touch • Nausea and vomiting • Blurred vision • Lightheadedness, sometimes followed by fainting

Post-drome

The final phase, known as post-drome, occurs after a migraine attack. People often report feeling drained or washed out, while some people feel elated. For about 24 hours after an attack, people may also experience:

- Confusion
- Moodiness
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Sensitivity to light and sound