

Migraine Prevention

Migraine preventive medications are taken on a daily basis to reduce the frequency of migraine attacks.

Who Should Be Considered for Preventive Therapy?

- Those with frequent migraine attacks. Migraines that occur at least once a week are generally considered frequent.
- People with especially disabling headaches.
- Individuals who are unable to tolerate certain acute medications—drugs taken at the beginning of an attack. For example, heart patients may not be able to take triptans, a class of effective acute migraine drugs.
- People who do not respond to specific acute medications or who use them too frequently.

Preventive Therapy Goals

The ultimate goal of preventive therapy is to reduce the burden that migraine sufferers experience. A realistic goal is a 50 percent reduction in headache frequency. With proper treatment, many patients are able to achieve this target. Preventive drugs usually need to be taken for at least six to 12 weeks before a decrease in headache frequency can be seen.

Other Benefits

In addition to reducing the frequency of attacks, preventive therapy may have other benefits that include:

- Reduced severity and duration of attacks.
- Improved responsiveness to acute medications.
- Decreased disability from headaches. Disability can be assessed by tracking the number of days off from work/school and the number of days at work/school but with reduced effectiveness. It also can include the number of family/social activities compromised by headaches.

Examples of Preventive Medications

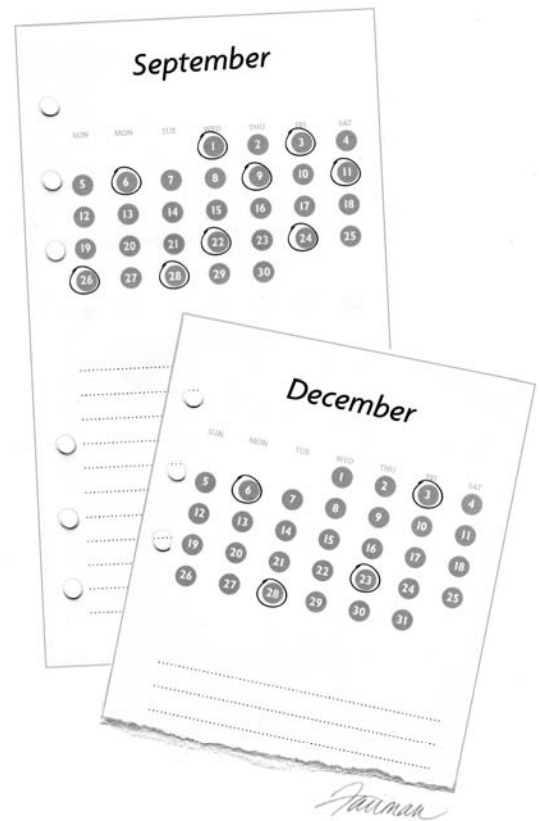
There are many effective preventive medications for migraine. Some of the more commonly used ones include:

- Beta-blockers—propranolol* (Inderal) and timolol* (Blocadren).
- Anticonvulsants—divalproex sodium* (Depakote and Depakote-ER), topiramate* (Topamax), and gabapentin (Neurontin).
- Antidepressants—tricyclics such as amitriptyline (Elavil) and less commonly SSRI antidepressants such as fluoxetine (Prozac).
- Vitamins and herbs—riboflavin (B2), magnesium, co-enzyme Q10 (CoQ10), and feverfew.

What You Can Do to Help Prevent Headaches

- Identify and avoid headache triggers (factors that can make someone more prone to having a headache). Keeping a headache diary can help you identify triggers, recognize patterns, and record progress.
- Regulate sleep. Try to establish a regular time to go to sleep and wake up.
- Do not skip meals.
- Use relaxation techniques such as biofeedback, exercise, yoga, and meditation.

*Approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for migraine prevention.



Preventive medications can reduce the frequency of headaches by 50 percent or more.

To Learn More

You will find more information related to migraine prevention on the ACHE website.

Simply go to
<http://www.achenet.org/news/newsletter.php>
and type the word "prevention"
in the search box.

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