



Your Pharmacy  
...your neighbour

# Health Really Matters™

## MIGRAINE Part 2

In this second part on migraine headaches, you'll learn about the various treatments available.



*Non-drug treatment: It's very important that migraineurs (migraine sufferers) educate themselves about all aspects of migraine headaches. One of the first things to do is to identify the triggers that may be causing your headaches. Using your migraine diary that lists the foods you eat, how you slept, the headache occurrences, time of onset and completion and other data, you may be able to determine what lifestyle habits are triggering your migraines. You may find that omitting certain foods from your diet may reduce the number of migraines.*

*When physical and emotional stress is a trigger, there are yoga, tai chi and other courses available to soothe the body and mind. Also, getting more exercise like walking briskly a few blocks every day can help. If you are a woman and are taking hormones, discuss with your doctor the possibility of reducing doses or trying an alternative. Your Medicine Centre pharmacists have information about this as well.*

### Drug Treatment

There are two forms of treatment for migraines. One is abortive therapy designed to stop the headache outright or at the very least reduce the pain significantly. These drugs are taken at the beginning of a headache before it gets too far. It is usually taken when the headache is in the aura stage. (See stages of migraines in Migraine-1 article).

**Over-the-counter medications:** Acetaminophen can be of some help. ASA with caffeine (sometimes with codeine added). Ibuprofen is another drug that is available without prescription in a strength of 200mg per tablet.

#### PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS FOR MIGRAINES:

**NSAIDs (Non Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs):** Besides ibuprofen (in higher strengths), others in this group include diclofenac, naproxen and many more. These drugs reduce pain and inflammation and can be effective in treating migraine pain.

**Triptans:** Back in the mid-1990s, a new class of drugs, the triptans, specifically designed for migraine headaches was released. Sumatriptan (Imitrex®) was the first of these. Others in this class include naratriptan (Amerge®), zolmitriptan (Zolmig®) and rizatriptan (Maxalt®). These drugs work by narrowing the blood vessels in the brain that have become dilated and edematous. When taken correctly, these medications can often stop a migraine in progress. As with most medications, there are side effects, which our pharmacists will apprise you of when you receive your first prescription.

Ergot Derivatives like ergotamine is an older class of drugs, which is used to stop a headache. Since the discovery of the triptans, the use of this group has lessened.

**Barbiturate combinations:** Used to be a mainstay of migraine treatment. They combined ASA, butalbital, caffeine and codeine in varying formulations. This is one product that can be overused resulting in more headaches.

*Continued on other side...*

