What You Should Know About Complex Migraines

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Complex Migraine

Migraine is a condition that is neurological in nature that causes moderate to severe headaches that may have nausea, vomiting, blurred vision, and dizziness accompanying the headache. Migraine sensitivity to light is common as well as sensitivity to some odors and sound. If you haven't heard of complex migraine, or complicated migraine, you may be interested to know how it is different from a "regular" migraine. A complex migraine will have the following symptoms present:

- Severe headache (on one side or both sides)
- Fatigue
- Slurred speech
- Loss of vision (temporary)
- Cold hands and feet
- Loss of sensation
- Nasal congestion

Some of the symptoms oftentimes make a complex migraine appear to be stroke-related. What actually occurs in a complex migraine is something makes the blood vessels in the brain become constricted, impeding blood flow.

Some Complex Migraine Triggers

- Stress (physical, emotional, or psychological)
- Depression
- Overuse of certain medications
- Hormonal conditions
- Food: nuts, processed meat, chocolate, products with tyramine, certain cheeses
- Health conditions that alter blood flow in the brain

Prevention/Treatment for Complex Migraine

- **If you have complex migraines, the best course of action is *prevention*.** Avoiding getting these migraines is the most effective intervention. This entails having the physician educate you in what the common triggers are and what to stay away from. The foods mentioned above need to be cut out of your diet as well as products containing nitrates. There are many foods or spices that affect people with migraines, depending on the individual. You may have triggers that have not been mentioned.
- **Getting enough sleep is important in preventing complex migraines.** Sleep is needed to reduce stress levels and help the body rejuvenate enough to handle stress when it comes your way. To facilitate better sleep, keep lights at a minimum before bedtime. Go to bed at the same time every night.
- **You may want to switch out your light bulbs if they are more than 60 watt.** Bright lights may trigger a migraine, so opt for 40 watt. If you feel a migraine coming on, rest in a cool, dark room to try to stave it

off.
- **Relaxation techniques are great for stress reduction and should be used.** Meditation, yoga, and tai chi are good options as well as bio feedback.

Medications

There are medications that may be useful for alleviating a complex migraine. Benzodiazepine may be given for some patients that may want to sleep through the migraine. Pain medications that might be effective are ibuprofen, Tylenol, aspirin, or Aleve, but this depends on the individual. If you have nausea that accompanies your migraine, metoclopramide and prochlorperazine can be prescribed for that. Other medications that may be prescribed for complex migraine are:

- Beta-blockers
- Amitriptyline
- Anti-epileptics (which are labeled for preventing migraines)
- Gabapentin
- Pizotifen (prescribed specifically for migraines)
- Clonidine

Ask your doctor about a referral to a headache specialist. The specialist can determine what medication will work best for you.