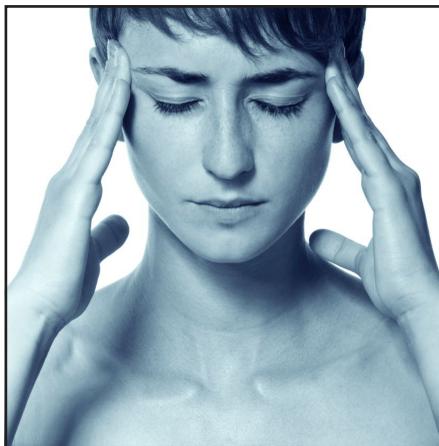


# Uncovering the Mystery of the Migraine

BY DR. WENDY ROGERS

Hi, I'm Dr. Wendy Rogers. I am a migraine sufferer and I'm not alone. Here are some migraine facts: approximately 36 million individuals in the United States, including us doctors, experience migraines with nearly 1 person in every 4 households. Migraines are in the top 20 causes of disability according to the World Health Report with American employers losing \$13 billion every year because of lost work days. Yet migraines are one of the most underfunded neurological health issues in regards to research in comparison to the level of economic impact they create.



I have experienced really bad headaches, many of which were probably migraines, since I was in grade school. Up to 10% of children suffer from migraines. In childhood, boys are more likely than girls but at puberty this changes and occur more frequently in women rather than men. Most people who have migraines do so before the age of 40.

Most everyone experiences headaches from time to time but a migraine is a much more severe version. Migraines are a syndrome because of the

wide range of possible symptoms that can vary by individual and incidence. The large variation in symptoms can make the diagnosis of migraines challenging and at least 50% of sufferers never seek help from their doctors. Some common experiences include severe throbbing head pain

on one side of the head or both accompanied by nausea, maybe vomiting, with light, sound, and/or smell sensitivity. Some individuals will also experience an "aura" before the pain begins which is a variety of visual changes including anything from seeing "sparkles" to color changes to temporary partial loss of vision. Generally the pain and other symptoms are severe enough that an

average of 90% of people are unable to perform their "daily tasks" during an active migraine. Just like the symptoms, the cause of a migraine can be highly variable. It can be triggered by hormonal imbalances, certain foods, stress, even changes in the weather.

The treatment of migraines is a two-fold approach of prevention and trying to stop the acute pain when one occurs. There are many medications used for both including anti-

seizure medications, anti-depressants, and anti-inflammatories such as acetaminophen and aspirin (often combined together with caffeine). Sometimes these medications work well particularly in ending a migraine in progress but they also come with many potential side effects including stomach issues, increased stroke risk, and medication-over use headaches (aka rebound headaches) which may be worse than the migraines themselves. Unfortunately, the majority of these medications do not treat the cause of the migraine which can be something different for each individual.

My approach is to do what needs to be done in a medically safe manner during an acute migraine but place the primary focus on prevention. This can be done in many ways and is often a puzzle that needs to be solved since there are so many possible reasons/triggers. Here are a few things I would consider when sorting out the puzzle:

- **Evaluate the "foundations":** diet, exercise, sleep, stress management
- **Keep a migraine log:** this can give important clues to help determine triggers.
- **Water intake:** dehydration can be a major cause for headaches and even migraines.
- **Food sensitivity testing:** a delayed immune response to certain foods can be the cause of migraines.

- **Consider nutrient deficiencies** such as magnesium and Vitamin B2.
- **Assess neurotransmitters** such as serotonin which often plays a role in migraines.
- **Assess for hormonal imbalances** as a trigger/contributor.
- **Symptom relief as needed in various ways:** herbs, pharmaceuticals, acupuncture

So I know you're dying to know how I'm doing with my migraines....ok maybe you're not but I'll tell you anyway. I still have migraines but have gone from having several in a month to maybe one or two. I've accomplished this via diet changes including gluten-free/dairy-free and removing foods that I tested sensitive to, regular exercise, better quality sleep and nutrients like magnesium. My goal is to be completely migraine-free so I still have pieces to my puzzle to figure out but I'm getting there. If you need assistance with your "puzzle", the doctors at True Health Medicine, PC would be more than happy to help!



**Dr. Wendy Rogers** is a naturopathic physician and acupuncturist with a family practice in Tualatin at True Health Medicine, PC. The clinic is located at 8555 SW Tualatin Rd, 503-691-0901.