

Am I Having a Migraine?

Clinical Features of a Migraine

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Here at the Cox Clinic of Chiropractic, approximately 25% of our patients are treated for headaches. There are many different types of headaches we treat, including migraines. So how is a migraine different? A migraine is more than just a headache! A migraine is a headache syndrome, characterized by various combinations of neurologic, gastrointestinal, and autonomic changes. What does that mean? It means that besides a debilitating headache, a migraine sufferer may also

experience a multitude of symptoms.

So how do you know if you are in fact having a migraine?

Chiropractors, trained to distinguish between two types; with a classic (migraine) without a common

Features of a Common Migraine	
A. Any two of the following 4 features	
1. Headache - unilateral site	
2. Headache - pulsating quality	
3. Associated Nausea	
4. Assoc. Photophobia or Phonophobia	
B. Other Criteria	
1. Similar headaches in the past	
2. No other organic disease	

a whole of

you are having a migraine. As chiropractors we are distinguished between one aura and one

In a migraine,

the pain is usually only on one side, moderate to marked in severity, and aggravated by physical activity. The temples are the usual predominant sites, but any area of the head, face, or neck may be involved. It usually lasts several hours or all day. Sleep often helps abort the attacks. The frequency is variable, but the average migraineur experiences about 1 to 2 headaches per month.

The headaches are terrible, that's true. But there must be associated systemic symptoms to be diagnosed as an actual migraine. Nausea is the most common (about 80%) and when severe, vomiting may occur. Photophobia and phonophobia (fear of light and sound) are also extremely common. Less commonly, migraine sufferers experience blurred vision, clogged

nostrils, loss of appetite or hunger, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, hot or cold sensations, and sweating. Impairment of concentration is common, and impairment of memory can occur. (See Common Table)

A classic migraine (with aura) may have similar pain as a common migraine, but is preceded by some sign or symptom of brain dysfunction. The most common auras are visual, with the sufferer seeing objects, bright lights, or spots in their vision. They may also experience

trouble or swallowing or double vision or ringing in the ears.

Features of a Classic Migraine	
A. At least 2 of criterion B	
B. At least 3 of the following	
1. One or more reversible aura symptoms	
2. At least 1 aura develops gradually	
3. No aura lasts greater than 60 minutes	
4. Headache follows aura within one hour	
C. Examination rules out secondary cause	

ence breathing difficulty, vision, the ears,

headedness, and even weakness in their arms and legs. (See Classic Table)

Headaches are common in our society, and commonly treated in a chiropractic office. Unfortunately many headache sufferers are incorrectly diagnosed as having migraines. Hopefully the preceding paragraphs will help you distinguish the difference for yourself, and for your loved ones. For more information, feel free to ask me (Dr. Fusco) or Dr. Cox here at the Cox Clinic, 293-6165, and we will be happy to answer any questions you have.

Adapted from: Migraine: Clinical features and Diagnosis by Berlinger et. al.