



# Health & Wellness

## If Only Your Headache Would Go Away!

By Nesreen Suwan, MD



**Are you among the approximately 30 million Americans, primarily women, affected by migraine headaches?**

When the migraine strikes, do you find yourself prisoner in a quiet dark room, disabled and unable to

perform normal functions? Do the migraine headaches disrupt your life, cause you to break social commitments, and miss work?

Migraine symptoms include some or all of the following:

- Moderate to severe head pain
- Sensitivity to light, sound or smell
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Lack of concentration
- Scalp tenderness
- Worsening of symptoms when bending over, going up stairs, or doing simple household or job activities

**Studies have concluded that migraine headaches are a genetic disease** that is caused by a sensitized nervous system. Migraine headache is a common neurological disorder that is frequently misdiagnosed as sinus headache (headache attributed to sinusitis, or sinus inflam-

mation). Just like any other physical disorder, if it is misdiagnosed, it will be mistreated.

**Symptoms of migraine headaches are frequently treated with over the counter analgesics.** The overuse of over the counter analgesics to treat migraines may actually result in more resistant rebound headaches and a worsening of symptoms when future migraines occur. Not only do ineffectual cures cause the patient to suffer unnecessarily, when the migraines that are untreated, or under treated, can actually cause the nervous system to become more sensitive, rendering more frequent, more severe and harder to treat migraine headaches. And migraine sufferers come to believe that these debilitating headaches are a normal part of their lives.

**While migraines are not a fatal illness, they do kill the quality of life of its victims.** Migraineur frequently feel guilty over the disruption it causes to others, and adds unbearable stress on his or her relationships with spouses, children and co-workers. Family members frequently feel stress over being unable to help the headache sufferer, and for occasionally doubting the pain and suffering of their loved one. Along with guilt come unhappiness, resentment, and anger on the part of the family member or coworker who ends up doing more than his or her share of the work.

**Misdiagnosis and treatment as sinus headaches can cause a worsening of symptoms.** The most important step, therefore, in any headache management is an accurate diagnosis. If migraine is diagnosed by a headache specialist, there are, fortunately, multiple treatment options available, including medications. Treatment options include and are not limited to medications, alternative medi-

cine, nerve blocks, Botox injection and nerve stimulation. Patients may respond to one or a combination of the above noted modalities.

**Because migraine is a neurological disorder** that involves changes in the brain and its vessels, it should be treated with migraine specific medications, under the care of a specialist.

**Even if you have been seen or treated for headaches in the past,** it would be well worth your time to find out whether new treatments or options are available, or whether your current treatment is right for you. A headache specialist can work with you to release you from your dark prison and recapture your day!

*Dr. Nesreen Suwan, M.D., is a Loyola Trained Neurologist, is a Board Certified Neurologist, and is a Board Certified Pain Management Specialist. She has also received additional certifications in headache medicine and specializes in treatment of headaches and migraines. She is the director of Midwest Specialty Headache Clinic.*



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