


Psychische Belastung
Mental stress

A photograph of a woman with voluminous curly hair, smiling warmly as she hugs a brown dog. The dog is wearing a yellow knitted sweater and a blue patterned collar. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting.

Regain your peace of mind

Mental stress when you have a migraine,
and how to cope with it

 **Life &
Migraine**

Live better. Every day.
A Novartis patient service.

Englisch

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Help for the mind

Migraine is classed as a neurological disorder and a severe migraine is far worse than a bad headache. The sudden attacks of pain that abruptly disrupt your normal daily routine can have a considerable impact on all of your everyday life, your professional and family life as well as your contact with friends and colleagues. They're extremely trying for your mind, not just your body. And that takes its toll: Patients with severe migraine, particularly those with the chronic form of the condition, are more likely to develop mental health issues as time goes by, some of which can be severe, such as depression, anxiety or burnout.^{1,2}

That make it all the more important to get information about this issue at an early stage. Being able to recognise the warning signs early on is essential if you are to take targeted action to avoid overload and prevent mental health issues from occurring.

This brochure sets out the most common symptoms and key coping strategies and is designed to be a helpful introductory guide. However you should also consult your doctor to obtain more information and professional help if necessary.



Migraine – when your mind lets off steam

CAUGHT IN THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF MIGRAINE

A severe migraine attack, with its distressing, never-ending pain in your head accompanied by nausea, vomiting, dizziness, sensitivity to noise and light, as well as many other different types of physical symptoms, can often force people to withdraw from their everyday life for days at a time. But the condition doesn't just disappear from your life once an attack is over: You're left with the fear that the symptoms might present again at any time and make your life hell once more.

People affected by migraine are often people with a high sense of responsibility and frequently conceal their pain because they don't want to appear unreliable or get a reputation for moaning. Worries about being conspicuous or a failure exert enormous pressure, making it difficult for people to set clear limits. They often have difficulty identifying their own limits and take on far too many tasks in their professional or private lives. This can cause stress to build up, which may sooner or later express itself physically.





TYPICAL SIGNS OF MENTAL OVERLOAD

If the pain attacks start to occur more frequently and last longer, coping with them can feel like an insurmountable challenge. It's not just dealing with the pain itself that's so tiring: Many people also suffer from feeling that they can't cope with the necessities of everyday life any more, whether in their family or professional life. Worry that you can't meet your partner's or children's needs is compounded by profound anxiety about the consequences for your job: Might your frequent absences or poor performance mean you have to change jobs or even receive a formal warning or dismissal? What financial impact might this have in future? These kinds of anxieties are highly individual and have an enormous influence on people's stress levels.

Over time, the frequent pain, anxieties and feelings of guilt can overwhelm your mind so much that it has to find some kind of outlet for the pressure. This can take the form of a wide range of physical and psychological problems, some of which can be serious.

To avoid these symptoms developing into serious mental health conditions it's essential to identify them early on and interpret them correctly. The figure below summarises the most important physical and emotional signs of mental overload and can be used as an initial indication of your mind's stress levels.

If you observe one or more of these symptoms it is advisable to consult your family doctor or consultant (neurologist) about your concerns first.

Stress-related physical and psychological symptoms

Cognitive level

- negative thoughts
- mental blocks
- difficulty concentrating
- intrusive thoughts
- decreased attention span
- memory impairment

Emotional level

- anxiety
- despair
- anger/rage
- hypersensitivity
- nervousness
- sadness
- loss of self-esteem
- loss of self-confidence
- anxieties about the future
- feelings of shame
- feelings of guilt

Vegetative level

- dizziness
- sleep disorders
- sweating/feeling cold
- nausea/vomiting/
abdominal pain
- loss of appetite
- weight loss
- loss of libido
- hypertension
- heart palpitations/
stabbing chest pain

Muscular level

- trembling
- stammering
- neck/back pain
- muscle tension
- tension headaches

Behaviour

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| avoidance behaviour | lethargy | social withdrawal | lack of interest |
| refraining from leisure activities or sport | listlessness | catastrophising | |



CONSULT AN EXPERT IF YOU'RE WORRIED

The frequent pain, and the physical and mental strain associated with it, means it's important not to underestimate the risk of people with migraine developing mental health complications such as depression or burnout.^{1,2} Experts even suggest that, particularly for people with chronic migraine, the risk is ten times greater than in the general population.¹

If you find yourself back in the cycle of mental overload, it is essential that you consult a specialist psychiatrist or psychotherapist. Your family doctor can refer you. Diagnosing a mental health condition is extremely complex as symptoms can often shade into one another and even overlap. Only a trained specialist can judge whether you are actually at a high risk of developing a mental health condition or already suffer from one.

Mental health conditions in people with migraine: burnout

WHAT IS BURNOUT?

Burnout means just that: feeling “burnt out”, and refers to a condition of emotional exhaustion caused by a long period of over-exertion and persistent stress. Symptoms of burnout usually develop gradually. The first sign is often a feeling of being overburdened that gradually transitions into a condition of physical and mental exhaustion. Once in this condition people might, for example, need more and more time to recover: All too soon a weekend off, and later on even a holiday, no longer provides enough time for regeneration, until you reach the limit of your physical and emotional resources and you have a complete breakdown.

MIGRAINE AND BURNOUT

Burnout and migraine are closely related: Migraine is one of the possible symptoms of burnout³, whilst the persistent physical and mental strain can also put people at risk of developing burnout because of the migraine.

RECOGNISING THE SYMPTOMS OF BURNOUT

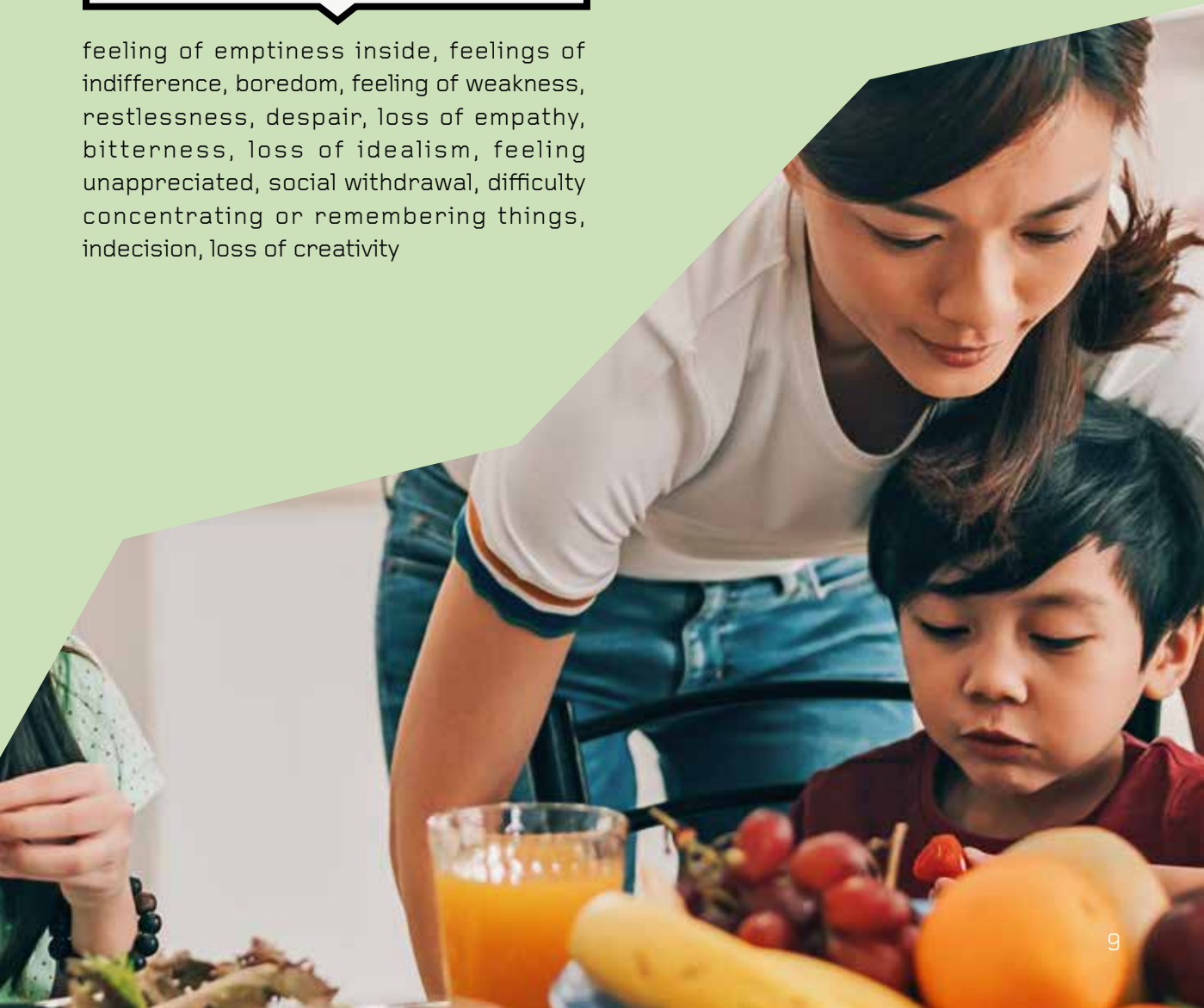
But how can you identify whether you are already heading for burnout? The typical symptoms of the condition vary widely and are not always easy to interpret. So people with migraine should consult a doctor quickly if they detect any of the following symptoms.⁴

Psychological symptoms

feeling of emptiness inside, feelings of indifference, boredom, feeling of weakness, restlessness, despair, loss of empathy, bitterness, loss of idealism, feeling unappreciated, social withdrawal, difficulty concentrating or remembering things, indecision, loss of creativity

Physical symptoms

fatigue, exhaustion, loss of performance, sleep disorders, back pain, nausea, chest tightness

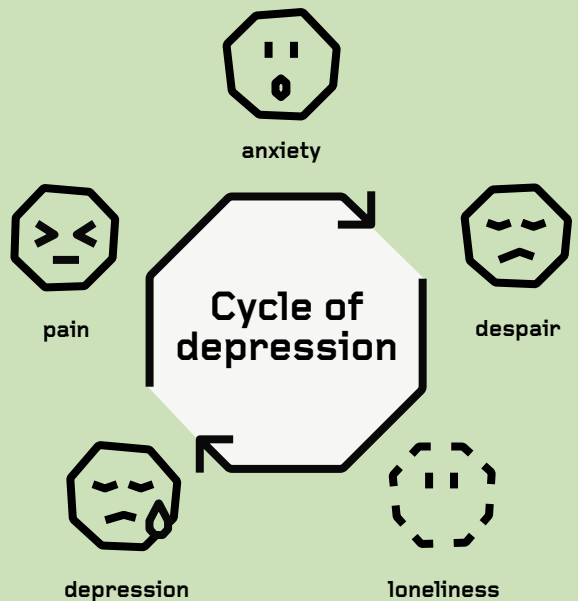




Mental health conditions in people with migraine: depression

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is a mental health condition that leads to low mood, lack of interest and loss of drive. Depression has nothing to do with the normal feelings of sadness that everyone feels from time to time. In people with depression the negative feelings persist for several weeks or even months and overshadow everything they do or think.





MIGRAINE AND DEPRESSION

Migraine and depression are closely related as the body and mind influence one another: According to data from studies, over 70 percent of all people with migraine also suffer from depression.^{1,2} Depression may be caused by a migraine and the pain, anxieties and stress associated with it. On the other hand a migraine can also be triggered by depression. The underlying mechanisms are still being researched.

RECOGNISING THE SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

In people with depression, symptoms are again very complex and multilayered and only a specialist can make a precise diagnosis. So you should consult a doctor if you observe any of the following symptoms.⁵

- persistent low mood, lassitude
- lack of interest or ability to get enjoyment out of life
- lack of drive, increased tiredness
- decreased concentration and attention span
- decreased self-esteem and self-confidence
- feelings of guilt and worthlessness
- apathy and indifference
- hopelessness
- irritability
- anxiety, negative thoughts about the future
- sleep disorders
- loss of appetite
- social withdrawal, suicidal thoughts and actions

Helping you to help yourself: Tips for a better life with migraine

SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP EARLY ON

First of all, the most important thing: Although there is no cure for migraine that doesn't mean you can't do anything about the condition and its consequences for your physical and mental health. On the contrary: The frequency of episodes and their intensity can be reduced in many cases, not least as result of the steady increase in the range of innovative active substances, particularly ones that will be used to provide prophylactic treatment with few side effects in future. In combination with professional help from psychologists and psychotherapists your everyday routines can often be redesigned

to stop the condition from dominating your entire life.⁶ Professional treatment can help you to recognise your own limits and even say no from time to time, if that is something you have difficulty with. This can also prevent you from becoming overloaded again.

So people who suffer from particularly distressing migraine attacks should seek professional help and support early on and obtain comprehensive advice from their doctor.



WHICH DOCTOR IS THE RIGHT ONE FOR ME?

A neurologist is generally the doctor of choice for people with severe migraine. As an expert in nervous system disorders he or she is also a specialist in all conditions associated with headaches. Special pain therapy treatment centres, where neurologists, psychologists, physiotherapists as well as pain and relaxation therapists work in an interdisciplinary team, are a good port of call for people with chronic headache.



A good relationship of trust between you and your doctor is just as important as their professional qualification. That's because a good therapy outcome requires an open collaborative partnership where both sides pull together.



Self-help groups/advice centres/ professional associations

MigräneLiga e. V. Deutschland	www.migraeneliga.de
Deutsche Migräne- und Kopfschmerzgesellschaft e. V.	www.dmkg.de
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Schmerzmedizin e. V.	www.dgschmerzmedizin.de
Deutsche Schmerzgesellschaft e. V.	www.dgss.org
Deutsche Schmerzliga e. V.	www.schmerzliga.de
SchmerzLOS e. V.	www.schmerzlos-ev.de
Deutsche Depressionsliga	www.depressionsliga.de
Stiftung Deutsche Depressionshilfe	www.deutsche-depressionshilfe.de
Deutscher Bundesverband für Burnout-Prophylaxe und Prävention e. V.	www.dbvb.org

TALK ABOUT IT, DON'T KEEP IT TO YOURSELF

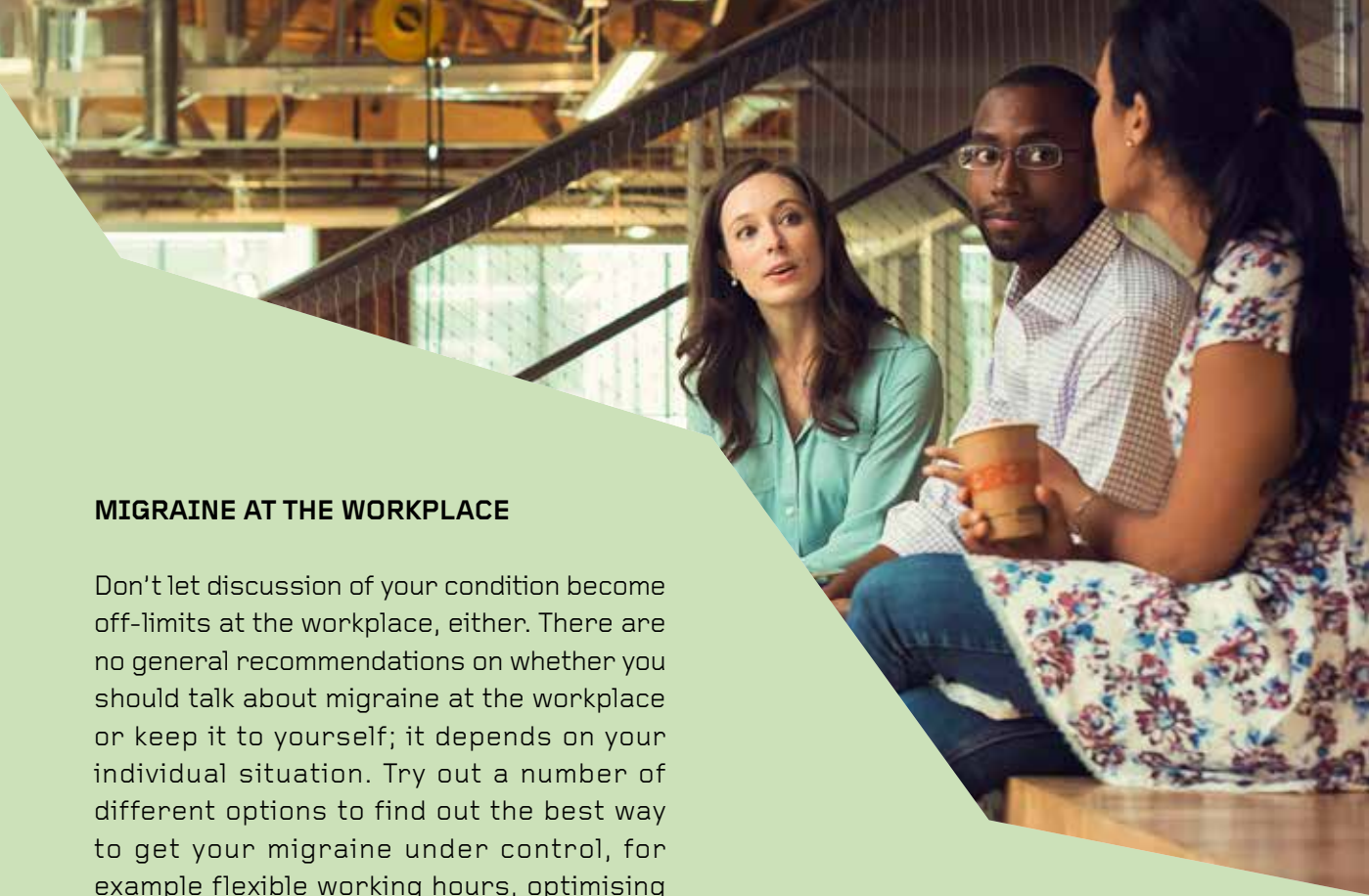
It's worth getting it "off your chest". Don't keep your problems to yourself, actively look for opportunities to talk to the people who care about you. Above all, don't shut your partner out; share your fears and worries about living with the condition with each other. It's not just a source of relief and consolation for both of you: talking together can also open up new ways of looking at the problems that you both find particularly stressful, as well as potential solutions.

If you can't find the right person to talk to you in your private life consider whether it might help to talk to other people with migraine. You might find self-help groups in your area or online self-help groups or forums interesting.

If you have children, involve your children in your condition too: explain to them why you need lots of rest and need to postpone family activities and sometimes ask other people to help with childcare during a migraine attack. You can use information materials on migraine developed specially for children, for example the materials provided by the patients' organisation "MigräneLiga". And give your children the opportunity to talk about their worries and needs. This doesn't just make your condition less scary for them - it can also prevent misunderstandings, feelings of guilt, disappointment and frustration.

Knowing about your condition can also promote understanding and empathy in your friends and other family members. You might be worried that your friends will stop involving you in joint activities if you often have to turn them down because you're too ill. If that happens, you need to take the initiative yourself as soon as you recover from your migraine attack to show that you still value the things you do together with them. And incidentally you'll benefit from more enjoyment of life and quality of life as a result of the lovely experiences during pain-free periods.





MIGRAINE AT THE WORKPLACE

Don't let discussion of your condition become off-limits at the workplace, either. There are no general recommendations on whether you should talk about migraine at the workplace or keep it to yourself; it depends on your individual situation. Try out a number of different options to find out the best way to get your migraine under control, for example flexible working hours, optimising the setup at your workplace etc. If none of this is enough consider whether you want to discuss your condition openly with your employer. There's no general advice here, you need to base your decision on your individual situation.

If you are planning to have an open discussion: explain why you cannot come to work when you have a severe migraine and that this has nothing to do with poor motivation or lack of responsibility. You might even manage to develop solutions that benefit both sides. These might include, for example, flexible working hours, a quiet area you can withdraw to for a while, or even the removal of specific triggers that

cause your migraines. It's really easy to set up a partition in an open plan office, and a flickering monitor or a desk lamp that's too bright can both be replaced easily. And talk to your colleagues who have to take over during your absences from work and if appropriate offer to support them during your migraine-free phases. This shows them that you appreciate their help and your are not taking the support of your colleagues for granted.

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONG!

You might find it difficult to ask other people for help. But still... if you regularly suffer from migraine a well-functioning social network is absolutely indispensable to avoid your everyday routine from going off the rails whenever you have an attack. Remember too that the additional stress could make your condition worse if you don't ask for support.

Start by developing your own emergency plan that kicks in when a migraine attack disrupts your everyday routine. This might include, for example, arranging things so you can quickly

access essential items such as medication, telephone numbers or your keys if an acute episode occurs. It can sometimes be helpful to talk to other people with migraine about this and benefit from their experience.

It's helpful to think about which of the people around you need to know about your condition and who can help you in an emergency. Clarifying everyone's role in advance will help them to deal with acute situations better and feel more relaxed about it so you don't need to feel bad about withdrawing for a while.



When developing the plan, concentrate on the following questions and then discuss them with the person affected:

- Which household tasks are a priority, which ones can be postponed?
- Can your partner or older children take on some of these tasks?
- Are there relatives, friends, neighbours or family members you can ask for help? There need to be clear rules about childcare well in advance. This includes agreeing precisely who can look after the children and when.

If your migraine means you have to go to hospital or a rehab centre it's a good idea to contact your health insurance company. In certain cases the company will provide a home help who will take on domestic duties where you can't sort this out yourself.



MULTIMODAL THERAPY AND PROPHYLACTIC DRUG TREATMENT

Multimodal therapy has proven to be the best option in principle for people with migraine. This is where neurologists, psychotherapists, anaesthetists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists work closely together to provide you with the best possible treatment tailored to your individual needs. As well as pain relief, it aims to reduce drug consumption, improve your quality of life and maintain or restore your capacity to work. The effectiveness of multimodal therapy has also been demonstrated in scientific studies: The frequency of headaches in patients whose condition is chronic can be reduced by more than half by the treatment.

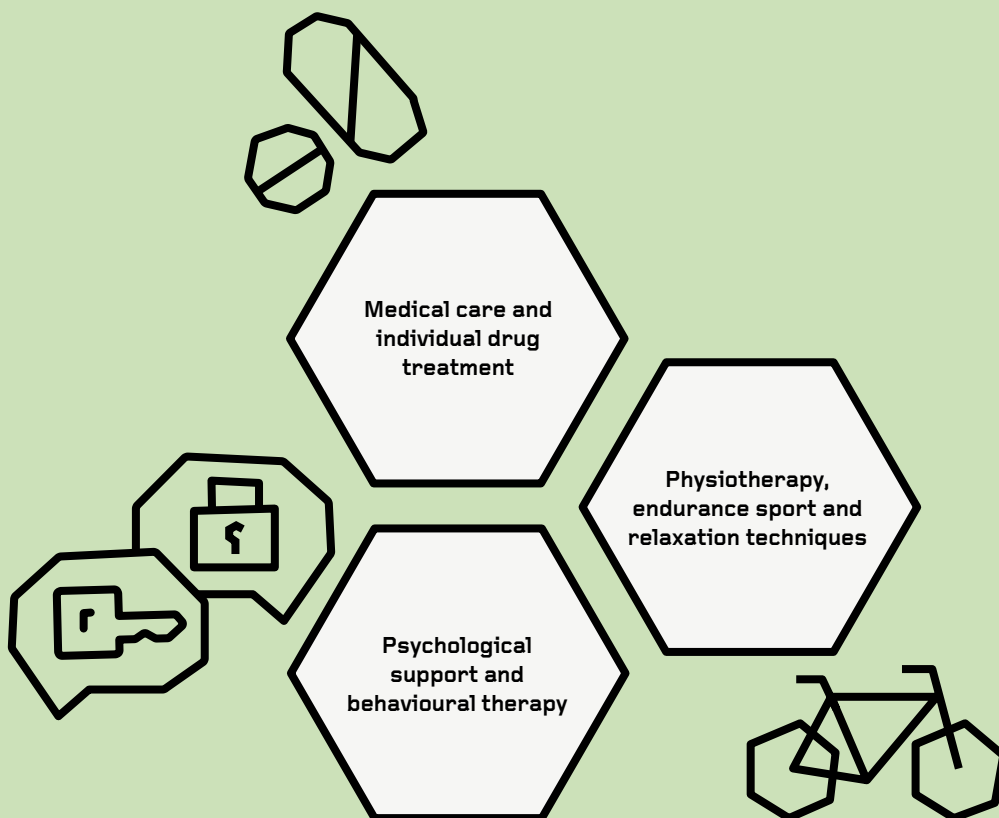


It involves those affected learning strategies that help them to recognise and respect their own limits and to integrate them into their everyday life.

The “Multimodal Therapy Options” brochure provides more information on this holistic therapy.

There are effective treatment options available to mitigate symptoms during a severe migraine attack, too. As well as various acute measures there are now specially developed prophylactic active substances with low side effects that reduce the frequency of migraine attacks.

Don't hesitate to ask your doctor about new treatment options at regular intervals – including, or even particularly, if you haven't yet found conventional migraine products sufficiently effective. Migraine therapy is and remains the subject of intensive research.



Find out more

Sources

- 1 Buse DC et al. Psychiatric comorbidities of episodic and chronic migraine. J Neurol 2013; 260: 1960–69.
- 2 Lampl C et al. Headache, depression and anxiety: associations in the Eurolight project. J Headach Pain 2016; 17:59.
- 3 Meine-gesundheit.de. Burnout. www.meine-gesundheit.de/krankheit/krankheiten/burnout (accessed on 26.05.2023)
- 4 Neurologen und Psychiater im Netz. Burnout-Syndrom: Anzeichen und Burnout-Erleben. www.neurologen-und-psychiater-im-netz.org/psychiatrie-psychosomatik-psychotherapie/erkrankungen/burnout-syndrom/anzeichen-burnout-erleben (accessed on: 26.05.2023)
- 5 Neurologen und Psychiater im Netz. Frühsymptome und Krankheitsbild. www.neurologen-und-psychiater-im-netz.org/psychiatrie-psychosomatik-psychotherapie/stoerungen-erkrankungen/depressionen/fruehsymptome (accessed on: 26.05.2023)
- 6 Deutsche Schmerzgesellschaft e.V. Kopfschmerzen. Kopfschmerz und Psyche. www.schmerzgesellschaft.de/topnavi/patienteninformationen/schmerzkrankungen/kopfschmerzen (accessed on: 26.05.2023)

Selbsthilfegruppen & Fachgesellschaften

Deutsche Migräne- und Kopfschmerzgesellschaft e.V.: www.dmkg.de
MigräneLiga e.V. Deutschland: www.migraeneliga.de
Deutsche Schmerzliga e.V.: schmerzliga.de
Deutsche Schmerzgesellschaft e.V.: www.dgss.org
SchmerzLOS e.V.: www.schmerzlos-ev.de
Deutsche Depressionsliga: www.depressionsliga.de
Stiftung Deutsche Depressionshilfe: www.deutsche-depressionshilfe.de
Deutscher Bundesverband für Burnout-Prophylaxe und Prävention e.V.: www.dbvb.org

Information on the internet on migraine, depression and burnout

Migraine: www.neurologen-und-psychiater-im-netz.org/neurologie/erkrankungen/migraene/was-ist-migraene
Depression: www.neurologen-und-psychiater-im-netz.org/psychiatrie-psychosomatik-psychotherapie/erkrankungen/depressionen
Burnout: www.neurologen-und-psychiater-im-netz.org/psychiatrie-psychosomatik-psychotherapie/erkrankungen/burnout-syndrom/was-ist-burnout

Novartis brochure service

Well informed all round! Our brief, concise migraine brochures provide further helpful information on the following topics:

- multimodal therapy options
- aspects relating to benefits and employment law
- stress in people with severe migraine
- preparing for your doctor's appointment
- training and education

You can find these brochures and further information on our web site for people with migraine:

Migräne-Wissen: www.migraene-wissen.de

Disclaimer

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More materials and information about migraine you may need for your everyday life or in relation to special topics can be found at www.leben-und-migraene.de.