

What is it?

A migraine is a headache that is characterized by intense throbbing or pulsating pain, normally on one side of the head. They can last anywhere from hours to days. Sometimes the pain is so severe it interferes with activities of daily living.

Migraines are often accompanied by nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light and sound. Some also experience an aura before or with the headache. Others do not experience the headache at all.



Stroke Prevention Clinic

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For More Information

Mayo Clinic. (2023, July 7). *Migraine*. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/migraine-headache/symptoms-causes/syc-20360201>



Migraine Aura

Stroke Prevention Clinic



Image courtesy of Microsoft Clip Art



CS-PIER-0109



[saskhealthauthority.ca](https://www.saskhealthauthority.ca)

Healthy People, Healthy Saskatchewan



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What is an aura?

An aura is a warning sign that you may experience a migraine soon.

Auras present in several different ways:

- Visual disturbances: shimmering or flashes of light, zig zag lines, blind spots or partial loss of vision
- Numbness or tingling on one side of the body than can spread to face and tongue of affected side
- Weakness on one side of your body
- Difficulty speaking

Auras usually last 10 to 30 minutes.

Not everyone with a migraine will experience auras.

Migraine Triggers

- **Hormone changes:** around menstruation, pregnancy and menopause in women
 - **Drinks:** alcohol, caffeine
 - **Stress**
 - **Sensory stimuli:** bright lights, loud sounds, strong scents and cigarette smoke
 - **Sleep:** missing sleep, jet lag
 - **Physical:** intense physical exertion, including sexual activity
 - **Weather changes**
 - **Medications:** vasodilators, oral contraceptives
- Food:** aged cheeses, salty and processed foods, skipping meals
- Food additives:** MSG, aspartame

Migraine Stages

Prodrome

Two days before you may notice subtle changes indicative of an upcoming migraine. These can include: depression, drowsiness, food cravings, etc.

Aura

Can occur before or during the migraine attack. Each symptom begins gradually.

Attack

Migraine attacks can last anywhere from 4 to 72 hours. Symptoms vary.

Postdrome

You may feel drained and washed out for a day following your migraine.

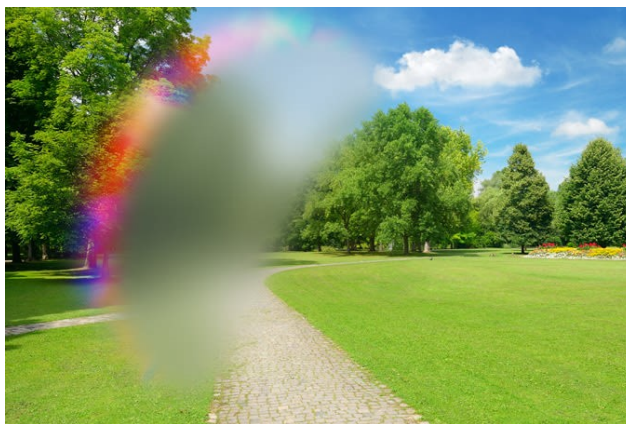


Image: <https://migrainecanada.org/posts/the-migraine-tree/roots/migraine-categories/migraine-with-aura-an-overview/>

The Saskatchewan Health Authority works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Saskatchewan as the traditional territory of First Nations and Métis People.

Diagnosis

At the Stroke Prevention Clinic, the neurologist will diagnose you based on your medical history, symptoms and neurological exam. They may send you for additional testing such as an MRI, or CT scan to rule out other medical problems that may be causing headaches.

Treatment

Your doctor may prescribe medication to take at the onset of symptoms. Other ways to treat migraines at home include:

- resting in a quiet and dark environment
- drinking plenty of fluids
- relaxation techniques
- avoiding triggers

Keeping a headache diary is helpful to identify your triggers and monitor which treatments work best for you.

If at any time you are concerned about your symptoms, or they are unusual for you, please seek medical attention.