CPNI
Cyprus Paediatric Neurology Institute
Παιδονευρολογικό Ινστιτούτο Κύπρου

LEAFLET FOR PARENTS AND PATIENTS

Migraine in children and young people

Migraine is one of the most common causes of headache in children and teenagers. It often runs in families. Migraine can be very unpleasant, but it is not dangerous, and with the right plan most children manage it well.

What does a migraine feel like?

- A moderate or severe headache, often throbbing or pounding
- In children it is often on both sides of the forehead or temples; teenagers may feel it on one side
- Feeling sick or vomiting, and looking pale
- Bright light and loud noise feel uncomfortable
- Pain gets worse with activity, so your child wants to lie down
- An attack usually lasts from about 2 hours up to a day or more
- Younger children may have tummy pain or dizziness instead of, or as well as, a headache

Aura

Some children have warning signs called an aura, usually lasting 5 to 60 minutes before the headache starts:

- Flashing lights, zig-zag lines or blind spots
- Tingling or numbness, often in one hand or the face
- Difficulty finding words

Common triggers

A trigger does not cause migraine, but can set off an attack. Common ones are:

- Missing meals or not drinking enough water
- Too little sleep, or a change in sleep routine
- Stress, worry or excitement, and also the relief after stress, such as weekends or holidays
- Bright or flickering light, loud noise or strong smells
- Illness, hot weather or very hard exercise
- Periods in teenage girls
- A few children find particular foods are triggers; there is no need to cut out foods unless a diary shows a clear link

What to do during an attack

- Give pain relief as early as possible: ibuprofen or paracetamol, at the dose on the packet for your child's age or weight
- Let your child rest or sleep in a quiet, dark room
- Offer sips of water and a light snack if they can manage it
- Do not give aspirin to children under 16
- Teenagers may be prescribed a specific migraine medicine (a triptan). Use it only as your doctor advised

Avoid using pain relief too often

Taking pain relief on more than 2 to 3 days a week can cause more headaches, known as medication-overuse headache. If your child needs pain relief this often, please see us so we can make a better plan.

Helping to prevent migraine

- ✓ Keep regular sleep, with the same bedtime and wake-up time every day, including weekends
- ✓ Eat breakfast and do not skip meals
- ✓ Drink water regularly through the day, including at school
- ✓ Get regular physical activity
- ✓ Take breaks from screens and schoolwork
- ✓ Talk about worries; relaxation and breathing exercises can help
- ✓ If attacks are frequent or disabling, we may discuss a daily preventive medicine

When to get urgent help

Call 112 or go to the nearest Emergency Department straight away if your child has a headache with any of the following:

- A sudden, very severe headache, the worst they have ever had
- Fever with a stiff neck, a rash that does not fade when pressed, or unusual drowsiness
- A headache after a head injury
- Weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, slurred speech or confusion
- Double vision, loss of vision, or new unsteadiness when walking
- A seizure (fit)
- Headaches that wake them from sleep, or come with vomiting in the early morning
- Headaches that get steadily worse over days or weeks, or are worse when coughing, straining or lying down

Keep a headache diary

Writing down each headache helps us find patterns and triggers. Please bring the diary to your appointment.

Date and time	How bad (0–10)	How long	What helped	Possible trigger

Contact CPNI

If headaches are happening often, are getting worse, or are affecting school or sleep, please call our office on +357 22 476 627 to book an appointment, or email cpni2007@gmail.com.

More leaflets and information: www.cpni.com.cy

This leaflet gives general information. It does not replace advice from your child's doctor.

Reviewed by Dr Paola Nicolaides, Consultant Paediatric Neurologist, November 2026.