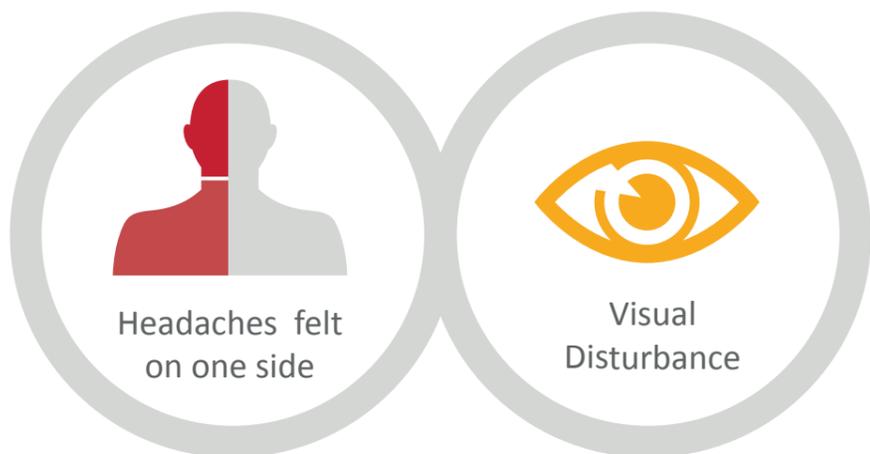


# ADVANTAGE

## Migraines

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### What are migraines?



### What causes migraines?



### How are they diagnosed and treated?

- 1 Physical examination
- 2 Blood tests
- 3 Eye examination
- 4 Brain scan

### Can I do anything to prevent migraines?



Sleep



Exercise



Avoid caffeine



## Questions

for Dr Thapelo Motshudi

### 1 What are migraines?

Migraines are recurrent headaches, usually felt on one side. They are often accompanied by some visual disturbance, such as sensitivity to light, or other abnormal sensory symptoms like an unusual smell. This is called an aura. Migraine headaches are quite painful and the intensity can be worsened by movement. Nausea and vomiting are also quite common and the headaches can last 4 - 72 hours.

### 2 What causes migraines?

Migraines have a strong genetic component. Approximately 70% of people who suffer from migraines have a family member or relative with migraines. In addition, they can be triggered by hormonal changes, stress, some foods, caffeine, alcohol, trauma to the head and lack of sleep. It is important to look out for these triggers so you know what to avoid in order to prevent attacks.

### 3 How are they diagnosed and treated?

On most occasions your medical doctor will be able to diagnose migraines from the history you provide. In addition to a physical examination, additional tests might be performed to exclude other conditions that may have a similar presentation. These can include blood tests, examinations of the eyes and brain scans. The treatment includes medication that one takes during an acute attack and tablets to prevent the recurrence. If one has noticed an obvious trigger then it makes sense to limit exposure to it within reasonable limits. It is however important note that migraines are chronic.

### 4 What else should migraine sufferers know?

A significant number of migraine sufferers (up to 62%) tend to have long periods of remission where they have no headaches. The frequency and severity of migraines improve with age. In addition, migraine sufferers who smoke, use oral contraceptives, or have high blood pressure or cholesterol have been shown to be at an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases and strokes. It is therefore important to get screened regularly for cardiovascular diseases and to treat them aggressively, should you be known to suffer from migraines.

### 5 Can I do anything to prevent migraines?

In addition to preventative medication, there are basic lifestyle changes that one can adopt, which include regular and adequate sleep; regular and frequent moderate exercise; caffeine avoidance; smoking cessation; stress reduction; and no red wine. Since there are other conditions that have similar symptoms, consult your doctor first before assuming that migraines are responsible for the headaches you experience.