

## Medications Can Help Prevent Migraine Attacks



Do you have more than four migraine headaches each month? Are your attacks so bad that it's hard to continue doing normal activities?

If so, you may want to talk with your doctor about taking a medication to help prevent attacks. These medications are different than drugs taken while you're already having a headache to reduce migraine symptoms and pain. Instead, they are taken daily to prevent migraine attacks, reduce the number of migraine events you have and limit their severity.

## What Are Preventive Migraine Medications?

Preventive migraine drugs work by blocking pain signals that travel between nerve cells in your brain. Four medications have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the prevention of migraine headaches:

- propranolol
- timolol
- divalproex sodium (brand name: Depakote)
- topiramate (brand name: Topamax)

Doctors sometimes prescribe medications not on this list, including drugs that are used to treat other conditions but also can be effective in treating migraines.

Your doctor will consider what triggers your migraine and your overall health to determine which medication is best for you. If you're still having occasional attacks while taking a preventive medication, ask your doctor if you can take drugs used to treat the pain and limit the duration of an attack. Often, preventive medications make drugs used to stop or limit a migraine work better.

**Preventive migraine treatments are considered successful when they reduce the number of attacks by 50 percent, shorten their duration, or make migraine medications taken during an attack work better.**



## Are Preventive Medications Right for You?

You may be a good candidate for one of these medications if:

- You have more than four migraine attacks each month.
- Your attacks are bad enough that they keep you from doing normal activities, such as work or school.
- Lifestyle changes, like avoiding things that trigger your headaches or altering your diet, don't control your attacks.
- Over-the-counter painkillers aren't effective in controlling your symptoms.
- Side effects from other medications are too severe.

## How to Take Medications to Prevent Migraine Attacks

Unlike medications taken while you're having an attack, preventive migraine medications are taken daily. When starting them, it's not unusual to try more than one medication before finding the one that works best for you. And you'll need to take your medication for several weeks before you know if it works. Once you find a preventive drug that works for you, you'll usually take it for six to 12 months.

## Other Preventive Options

### Botox

Botox injections can reduce the number of attacks by blocking nerve signals that cause them. You and your doctor may consider Botox if:

- You have chronic migraine, with migraine symptoms occurring at least 15 days a month for three consecutive months.
- You've tried at least three preventive migraine medications for a minimum of six weeks.

Botox injections for migraine should be given by a doctor trained in migraine treatment, rather than cosmetic treatment.

### CGRP Blockers

These new medications were released in 2018. Blocking the activity of the neurotransmitter CGRP has been shown to effectively suppress or interrupt migraine symptoms in many patients.

They equal the efficacy of triptans but without the risks of vasoconstriction, and have minimal side effects. Talk to your doctor to see if these monthly injectable medications are an option for you.

Learn more about all the preventive treatments by [clicking here](#).



### Side Effects

Most people take migraine medications without having serious side effects. Most drugs that prevent migraine have been in use for a time, for treating other conditions like high blood pressure, seizure disorders, and depression. The doses taken for migraine are usually smaller than doses needed to treat these other conditions.