

## Migraine Prevention

*Migraine preventive medications are taken on a daily basis to reduce the frequency of migraine attacks.*

### **Who Should Be Considered for Preventive Therapy?**

- Those with frequent migraine attacks. Migraines that occur at least once a week are generally considered frequent.
- People with especially disabling headaches.
- Individuals who are unable to tolerate certain acute medications – drugs taken at the beginning of an attack. For example, heart patients may not be able to take triptans, a class of effective acute migraine drugs.
- People who do not respond to specific acute medications or who use them too frequently.

### **Preventive Therapy Goals**

The ultimate goal of preventive therapy is to reduce the burden that migraine sufferer's experience. A realistic goal is a 50 percent reduction in headache frequency. With proper treatment, many patients are able to achieve this target. Preventive drugs usually need to be taken for at least 6 to 12 weeks before a decrease in headache frequency can be seen.

### **Other Benefits**

In addition to reducing the frequency of attacks, preventive therapy may have other benefits that include:

- Reduced severity and duration of attacks.
- Improved responsiveness to acute medications.
- Decreased disability from headaches. Disability can be assessed by tracking the number of days off from work/school and the number of days at work/school but with reduced effectiveness. It also can include the number of family/social activities compromised by headaches.

### **Examples of Preventive Medications**

There are many effective preventive medications for migraine. Some of the more commonly used ones include:

- Beta-blockers – propranolol\* (Inderal) and timolol\* (Blocadren).
- Anticonvulsants – divalproex sodium\* (Depakote and Depakote-ER), topiramate\* (Topamax) and gabapentin\* (Neurontin).
- Antidepressants – tricyclics such as amitriptyline (Elavil) and less commonly SSRI antidepressants such as fluoxetine (Prozac).
- Vitamins and herbs – riboflavin (B2), magnesium, co-enzyme Q10 (CoQ10) and feverfew.

### **What You Can Do to Help Prevent Headaches**

- Identify and avoid headache triggers (factors that can make someone more prone to having a headache). Keeping a headache diary can help you identify triggers, recognize patterns and record process.
- Regulate sleep. Try to establish a regular time to go to sleep and wake up.
- Do not skip meals.
- Use relaxation techniques such as biofeedback, exercise, yoga and meditation.