

HOW TO USE A HEADACHE DIARY

The right information, the right decisions!

What you can observe in a diary

- ✓ Attack frequency and severity
- ✓ Acute medication use and results
- ✓ Medication overuse
- ✓ Specific symptoms (aura, vomiting, dizziness)
- ✓ Menstrual periods
- ✓ Self-care practices
- ✓ Effect of the preventives you try
- ✓ Triggers

Migraine is invisible with an MRI... but it is very visible on a diary

During your migraine journey, you will try different treatments, and it will be essential to observe what is going on. Of course, if you benefited from a 75% improvement, it will be obvious. But sometimes, success depends on your detailed observations guiding treatment. **A headache diary is a key to successful migraine management.** It does not have to be time consuming. It's a habit to adopt.

Will I keep a diary all my life?

Of course not. The diary is a tool. It should be worth your time and effort. **It is essential during the treatment trial periods**, but once you reach a more stable zone, the diary can be stopped. If things go unstable again, restart. Some people prefer to keep a basic diary long term

Which diary to use, paper or app?

Paper diaries can be found on [our website](#). APPs: many options are available. Owned by Migraine Canada, the **Canadian Migraine Tracker app** is a simple option. Or create your own calendar or Excel table if it works for you!

Help your healthcare provider to help you make the best decision

No matter which technique you choose, **bring the results to your appointment!** This way your healthcare provider will:

1. Have a quick and clear overview of how you are doing
2. Have the right information to propose options
3. Spend more time discussing options with you

In the end, your decisions for the next treatment steps will be easier.



From trigger watching to self-care and empowerment

At the beginning of your migraine journey, you will learn about triggers. Some can be avoided, but if your attacks are frequent, trigger watching can become discouraging and not that helpful. Consider switching your mindset to increasing self-care practices and monitor these instead. It will give a positive feel to your diary and promote empowerment.

How do I record the results of acute medications?

The following codes are often used.

S = success, the medication provided relief

P = partial success, some relief

F = failure, the medication did not work

SE = side effects

R = recurrence, the symptoms got better but the headache came back the same day.

What is the 1-2-3 technique?

The 0-10 pain scale is not ideal for migraine management, as there are many symptoms other than pain, and it's not easy to make statistics with 0-10 levels. A **mild-moderate-severe** approach may work best...without forgetting the precious symptom free days! **1-2-3** may mean different things for different people, but is based on how much the migraine attack impacts your function.

	0 = Symptom Free	1 = Mild	2 = Moderate	3 = Severe
Intensity	Pain free!	Mild	Moderate	Severe
Other symptoms	None	May be absent	Present	Prominent
Acute treatment	None	Maybe not needed	Usually works	May fail
Impact on function	None	Can function	Activities slowed	Activities impossible

How can I share my results if my appointment is by phone?

Send a picture of your diary to your healthcare provider's clinic. If you use the **Canadian Migraine Tracker**, use our Summary function that allows you to send a report by email or fax. If you can't send a report, calculate your headache days and be ready to share your info.

