

# Therapeutic Management of an Acute Migraine Attack in Pediatrics (6-17 years)

## International Classification of Headache Disorders diagnostic criteria for migraine

- Must have had at least 5 headaches
- The headache must last 2-72 hours long

The headache must have **ONE** of the following:

- Nausea **AND/OR** vomiting
- Light AND noise sensitivity

The headache must have **TWO** out of the 4 criteria:

- Pain that is unilateral or bilateral (typically frontotemporal)
- Pulsating quality
- Moderate or severe pain
- Worsened by, or causes avoidance of routine physical activity

## Rules of treatment

1. Treat early, as soon as the attack starts.
2. Repeat 1 dose prn within 24h if attack persists after 1st dose in appropriate interval.
3. Maximum doses: 2 days/week for triptans; 3 days/week for NSAIDs.
4. For patients with a lot of emesis/early emesis, consider nasal spray or ODT format.
5. Medications from different classes may be used in combination

## Recommendations

### Non-specific treatment of migraine attacks

TREATMENT	DOSAGE	INTERVAL	MAXIMUM
Acetaminophen	15 mg/kg/dose	q4-6h prn	1000 mg/dose, 75 mg/kg/day or 4000 mg/day
Ibuprofen	10 mg/kg/dose	q6-8h prn	600 mg/dose, 40 mg/kg/day or 2400 mg/day
Naproxen	5-7 mg/kg/dose	q8-12h prn	500 mg/dose, 10 mg/kg/day or 1000 mg/day

### Specific treatment of migraine attacks for patients

TREATMENT	DOSAGE	INTERVAL	MAXIMUM	
Almotriptan	< 40 kg: 6.25 mg PO ≥ 40 kg: 12.5 mg PO	Can repeat in 2 hours, max 2 doses/24 hours	40 kg: 12.5 mg ≥ 40 kg: 25 mg	6.25 mg and 12.5 mg tablets approved by Health Canada and FDA for ≥ 12 yo
Rizatriptan Tablets & ODT	< 40 kg: 5 mg PO ≥ 40 kg: 10 mg PO	Can repeat in 2 hours, max 2 doses/24 hours	40 kg: 10 mg ≥ 40 kg: 20 mg	5 mg ODT approved by FDA for ≥ 6 yo
Sumatriptan nasal spray	< 40 kg: 5 mg PO ≥ 40 kg: 20 mg PO	Can repeat in 2 hours, max 2 doses/24 hours	40 kg: 10 mg ≥ 40 kg: 40 mg	10 mg nasal spray approved by European Medicines Agency for ≥12 yo
Sumatriptan/Naproxen combined tablet	< 40 kg: Do not use due to the 500mg naproxen dose which is too high ≥ 40 kg: 85mg Sumatriptan/500 mg Naproxen once per day			85/500 mg tablets approved by FDA for ≥ 12 yo
Zolmitriptan Tablets, ODT & nasal spray	< 40 kg: 2.5 mg PO ≥ 40 kg: 5 mg PO	Can repeat in 2 hours, max 2 doses/24 hours	40 kg: 5 mg ≥ 40 kg: 10 mg	2.5 mg nasal spray approved by FDA for ≥12 yo

### Anti-nausea medication

TREATMENT	DOSAGE	INTERVAL	MAXIMUM
Metoclopramide liquid, tablets	0.1-0.3 mg/kg/dose PO	q6h prn	10 mg/dose
Ondansetron liquid, tablets and ODT	0.15-0.2 mg/kg/dose PO	q8h prn	8 mg/dose
Prochlorperazine tablets and suppositories	0.1 mg/kg/dose PO/PR	q6-8h prn	10 mg/dose



## Over-the-counter preventive treatment

TREATMENT	DOSAGE	INTERVAL	MAXIMUM
Coenzyme Q10 or ubiquinol	1-3 mg/kg/day	Daily or BID	200 mg/day
Magnesium (elemental)	9 mg/kg/day	BID or qHS	600 mg/day
Vitamin B2 (riboflavin)	200-400 mg/day	Daily or BID	400 mg/day

## Pharmacological preventive treatment <sup>9, 15</sup>

TREATMENT	DOSAGE	INTERVAL	MAXIMUM
Amitriptyline	1 mg/kg/day	HS	75 mg/day
Propranolol	2-4 mg/kg/day	TID	120 mg/day
Topiramate	2 mg/kg/day	Daily to BID	200 mg/day

## SUGGESTIONS FOR PREVENTIVE TREATMENT

1. Therapeutic trials should be a minimum of 6-8 weeks at the target dose.
2. Titration of pharmacologic preventive interventions to the target dose should start low and go slow, over 4-8 weeks.
3. Screen for contraindications to treatments prior to starting them.
4. Treatment decisions need to be individualized based on the patient's preferences and medical profile.

## SELF-MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

### Non-pharmacological recommendations for daily headache prevention

#### Exercise

- Moderate to high intensity physical exercise 30-60 minutes a day.

#### Sleep

- Establish a regular sleep routine (consistent sleep/wake schedule) and ensure adequate amounts of sleep. Avoid screens and other stimulating activities 1 hour prior to sleep.

#### Food and Diet

- Regular meals and fluid intake throughout the day (goal of 8 cups of water/day) is recommended.
- Avoid skipping meals; include protein rich foods in every meal.
- Limit or reduce the amount of caffeine in the diet to avoid caffeine withdrawal headaches. Caffeine includes iced tea, caffeinated soda, energy drinks, chocolate, coffee, tea.
- A small number of people may have specific food triggers (e.g. tyramine, histamine). Triggers can be identified by keeping a headache diary and eliminated i identified.
- It is NOT recommended to undertake multiple elimination diets.

#### Mind and Body Connection

- Daily mindful exercises (meditation, visualization, deep breathing, biofeedback) and body relaxation techniques (yoga, massage, physiotherapy exercises) can be used for prevention of a headache attack and to lower pain/prevent escalation of pain during a headache attack.
- Activity pacing is a helpful tool to support patients to stay engaged in daily activities and limit activity avoidance.
- Anxiety and depressive symptoms are common in children and adolescents with migraine. It is recommended to screen for these and ensure that patients have access to resources for mental health support if symptoms are present.

References available at [www.headachesociety.ca](http://www.headachesociety.ca)

The recommendations and all other information in this leaflet are based on published guidelines and on the expert consensus endorsed by the Pediatric Canadian Headache Network (PeCaHN). The advice is intended solely for insured medical professionals and Migraine Canada expressly disclaims any direct or indirect liability to any patient.

