

# MIGRAINES

Searching for remedies against scouring pain is a frustrating journey

*Charm editor  
Anne Rodgers  
shares her  
headache  
diary —  
including how  
she found 27  
straight days  
of relief for the  
first time in  
five years.*

A little more than a year ago, I used this space to outline my ongoing battle with migraine headaches. Though 27 million Americans are afflicted, I had no idea so many of you read this newspaper.



**Anne Rodgers**  
*Old Enough*

Reader response was immediate. Women — and a few men — wrote to say my story mirrored theirs. Suggestions for treatment flooded my inbox. I wrote at the time that I'd update readers on new discoveries along my migraine journey,

so it's time to make good on that promise — and to share reader strategies for battling this stubborn condition.

Back in February 2006, I was in search of headache prevention. The medication Maxalt generally banished my migraines once they occurred, but herbs, vitamins, blood pressure medicine and Depakote had all fallen short in the prevention category. My headache diary that month shows 17 entries.

I had applied for acceptance in a research study using Botox injections in the shoulders, neck and forehead to anesthetize the primary muscles involved in migraines. I passed the preliminary phase and was hopeful.

But I wasn't accepted — because of a technical glitch — and my deep disappointment led me to rethink my long-range strategy.

I dislike being a whiner, especially when it comes to my migraines. I can't imagine anyone cares to listen to me talk about my aching head, and I'm aware that, to some degree, negative thinking impacts my healing process and may even exacerbate the pain. I can cite lots of reasons not to complain.

Nonetheless, when I'm on my eighth or ninth day of a cycle of migraines, life is grim. I take Maxalt, and 24 hours later, the headache bounces right back. If I preemptively take Maxalt 12 hours after the first dose, it only postpones the relapse by 12 hours. My "rescue" meds — Lorcet and antihistamines — don't

See RODGERS, 6D ▶

*20 reader suggestions for fighting migraines, 6D*

*To read Anne Rodgers' original column about migraines, see [PalmBeachPost.com/charm](http://PalmBeachPost.com/charm)*

**charm** \*

The Anti-Aging Panel can't agree on Olay Regenerist Eye Derma-Pods, 4D

#2007.05A

# Stepping up to FIGHT MIGRAINES

► RODGERS *from 1D*

always work either.

That's when I feel desperate. I go through my day on the edge of tears. If someone asks how I'm doing, it's all I can do to lie and say, "fine" and move on. Because, honestly, talking about it brings the despair closer to the surface. I don't feel comfortable with people's pity and I'm not in need of advice on another thing to try or what to do to make this problem disappear. When suggestions are made, I feel defeated, like the speaker must think if I'd just done "whatever," I'd be cured, or at least better. In my vulnerable state, it feels like I'm being told that if I'd only manage this disease more effectively, I wouldn't be suffering.

I realize mostly people are just being helpful. But pain makes us all grumpy.

Besides, I *am* actively managing my disease. For four years, I've been aggressively chasing the root cause of my migraines. I've embraced protocol after protocol, and I've seen small improvements — and reveled in them. But I have setbacks and recurrences, and some days I feel like a personal failure because of them.

That said, I have — with the help of some new strategies — located some light at the end of the tunnel. My neurologist, Dr. Paul Winner of Palm Beach Neurology, always has told me my migraines likely are tied to hormonal influences, and that once I pass menopause, they'll dramatically decrease. My recent blood test assures me I'm well into that transition, so I'm sure

incidence of migraines.

Mike Kippenberger, DDS, of Jupiter fit me for mine, and in June I had only six headaches. What a great month. I notice from my charts that I was taking a second dose of Maxalt 12 hours after each migraine, as preventive, so that may have helped, too.

I had no side effects from the NTI, but my headaches didn't disappear, as Dr. Mike and I had hoped. I had eight in July, nine in August and eight each in September and October. Few of these were multi-day headaches, though, and I felt encouraged.

Then in November, I had 10 headaches, and decided I'd keep using the NTI, but look for something to add.

■ A loving friend had done research on reflexology, which is the application of pressure to the feet to affect corresponding parts of the body. The idea is that pressure applied to the feet generates a signal through the peripheral nervous system. From there, it enters the central nervous system where it is processed in the brain and relayed to internal organs. Finally, a response is fashioned that is sent onto the motor system.

I know it sounds far-fetched, but pain is a powerful motivator. On Dec. 4, I began treatment with Nancy Culver, one of the best-known reflexologists in the area. I had seven headaches that month, including a nasty three-day one shortly after my second appointment, and January was awful. I tried to convince myself that the reflexology was irritating things up in a good way, and that improvement was imminent. Somewhere in that night,

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But I a credit : DA-  
approved. tal appliance I  
use with reducing the num-  
ber of my headaches, and  
— more dramatically — my  
recent sessions with a re-  
flexologist, which coincided  
with a sharp drop in the  
frequency of my migraines.

I deliberately undertook  
only one therapy at a time.  
Starting several at once  
means you'll never know  
what worked — plus, there's  
a substantial amount of  
psychic energy involved  
in beginning a treatment.  
Summoning the enthusiasm

and hope you need to tackle yet another "cure"  
is difficult when you're sick. Most protocols  
require doctors' appointments or diet changes  
or research or taking pills, not to mention an  
outlay of money, time and energy. Believe me,  
it's hard to summon your faith and gear up for  
another "sure thing" after years of dead-end  
treatments.

Still, what choice do you have?

Herewith, an outline of my path toward  
recovery, which by the way, always has in-  
cluded plenty of exercise. Steal anything you  
think might work for you, but know that no two  
migraine sufferers suffer alike.

■ Last year, on Feb. 11, I began using Phy-  
toProlief, a progesterone cream by Arbonne  
suggested by a reader. He predicted results in  
one to two days, but in March, I recorded 13  
headaches, and April brought 15.

■ On May 17, I first used an NTL, which  
stands for nociceptive trigeminal inhibitor,  
but who can remember that? It's basically a  
bite guard, but not the kind of bite guard that  
keeps you from grinding your teeth. (I already  
had one of those, and had been wearing it for  
almost 8 years.)

This one is quite small and though it sits in  
the front of your mouth, it's designed to keep  
your back teeth from even touching, which in  
turn prevents the trigeminal nerve from en-  
gaging. (Put a pencil between your teeth and  
bite. Feel that pulsing place in your temples?  
That's the seat of the trigeminal muscle,  
thought to be the No. 1 trigger for migraines.)  
If you keep it unengaged, it often reduces the

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(not a vitamin) lled Juic  
PLUS+ which cided to try.  
I also went for a blood test and  
a saliva test, both of which con-  
firmed I'm in menopause.

Put it all together, and things  
finally began to lighten up. I  
recorded only five headaches  
in February and four in March,  
followed by 27 days with no  
headaches, a stretch I haven't  
experienced in at least five  
years.

■ Another helpful treatment  
I pursued was medical mas-  
sage. I've visited Cheryl Lenz  
for almost two years to reduce  
the aches and pains of an aging

body and to address the stress that I know  
exacerbates my headaches.

■ This month, I was accepted for a mi-  
graine mediation study through Dr. Winner's  
office. I decided to apply for it because there  
was no placebo (I need *medicine* when I get  
migraines!) and the promising product being  
tested was being compared to Maxalt. So, I'm  
either taking what I'd already use or some  
wonder drug; I couldn't lose.

"There's a revolution and evolution tak-  
ing place simultaneously in treatment for  
migraines," Dr. Winner said. "The revolution  
is with MK-0974 (the wonder drug I might be  
taking in my blind test), which will replace  
triptans. The evolution is in the development  
of new triptans, some of which are available  
now and some in a few years."

Dr. Winner describes migraines as "a ge-  
netically inherited disease influenced by the  
environment to significant degrees," but he  
firmly believes you can "modulate acute and  
preventive aspects of this disease."

— He told me that adults should have control of  
their headaches within two hours and should have  
no more than three or four per month. "If you're  
not staying within those boundaries, seek out  
help."

One last tip from the doctor. He recom-  
mends [www.americanheadachesociety.org](http://www.americanheadachesociety.org)  
for the information hungry.

"It's a peer-reviewed Web site that's profes-  
sionally controlled," he said. "You can trust  
what's on there."

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# 20 ways to treat migraines

When I first wrote about migraines, readers were more than generous with suggestions and tips. They shared stories and offered warm sympathy.

Here's a partial list of their migraine-fighting ideas, some of which should definitely be run past your doctor before you try them.

## Amitriptyline

This drug is classed as an antidepressant, but it has an anti-migraine action separate from its antidepressant effect. It is not clear how it works, but one reader said it cured his wife of migraines.

## Vitamin B6

Try 100 milligrams a day.

## Celiac treatment

Ask your doctor to check you for celiac disease or gluten intolerance; if you have it, get off gluten. The test for it is called tissue transglutaminase (tTG, IgA). A number of people who are gluten-intolerant have no symptoms or only neurological symptoms such as migraines. A good book on this subject is *Dangerous Grains* by Dr. James Braly. Visit [Celiac.com](http://Celiac.com) for more info.

## Yoga

Reduces stress, a factor in many migraines, and facilitates deep breathing, which is effective in pain management.

## Topamax

Believed to help calm overexcitable nerves in the brain that cause migraines. Some sufferers swear by it, others say the side effects are too disruptive.

## Caffeine

"Have you tried caffeine to preempt and then to alleviate?" one reader asked me. "I hate to admit it, but I've taken to drinking caffeine soda straight thing in morning since coffee can put me over the edge, and believe it or not it helps with those darn blood vessels." This is easy, and I tried it, and it occasionally has worked to stave off a headache.

## Nikken products

Nikken is a company which markets Asian alternative health products in the United States.

## Mangosteen juice

A brand name for this is Xango and it's quite expensive, but you only need 1 ounce twice per day. A reader asked why migraine sufferers would take drugs when this food — with certain powerful phytonutrients — can balance the body's systems and eliminate headaches naturally? I have a bottle of this on my counter but haven't yet opened it. I'm sure it works for some people, I'm just as sure it won't cure all 27 million Americans with migraines.

## Noni Juice

This is made from the fruit of the *Morinda citrifolia* (noni) tree. It's said to have strong antioxidant, anticoagulation, anti-inflammatory and anticancer properties.

### **Philip Stein teslar watch**

This watch was one of Oprah's favorite things a few years ago, and a reader bought it for her insomnia. (Her nonmedical opinion is that her migraines, insomnia and motion sickness are all tied together.) Though her insomnia didn't improve, this woman's migraines disappeared. And she experienced no queasiness on a subsequent cruise. When she sent the watch back for a chip, her migraines came back with a vengeance.

### **Cranialsacral therapy**

One reader noted that the Upledger Institute in Palm Beach Gardens, which deals with pain management, offers this. It's a noninvasive massage technique that can alter blood flow restrictions or blockages.

### **Axe Brand Medicated Oil**

You put a dot on your forehead right in the middle, on each side of your temple and on your chin. Found at Asian food stores.

### **Reliv**

Frosty health shakes that deliver vitamins, minerals, proteins and micronutrients. Visit [www.Reliv.com](http://www.Reliv.com).

### **CoQ10**

A lack of cell energy in the brain may be a cause of migraine. CoQ10 is a nutritional supplement and natural compound that might give a boost to those cells and help prevent migraine. I talked to several people who have used this to good effect.

### **Magnesium**

Minerals affect blood vessel spasticity and, therefore, pain. Many people don't get enough magnesium, according to one reader, who takes the recommended daily allowance via tablets, up to 1,000 milligrams.

### **ACE inhibitors**

Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors are commonly used for treating high blood pressure. They block the production of the protein angiotensin, which constricts blood vessels and might be involved in migraines.

### **Christian Body Migraine Defense**

I asked my neurologist about this herbal supplement, which one reader swore by. He said there's no scientific research to support it, but that doesn't mean it doesn't work. Find it online.

### **MigraGard by Solaray**

The main ingredient in this supplement is feverfew. You can get it at most health food stores. One reader, a retired R.N. who said she's careful about what she puts in her body, takes it every day and hasn't had a migraine in six years.

**Feverfew** — An herbal cure in its pure form. See above.

### **Chiropractic treatment**

— Some chiropractors specialize in treating migraine patients.

— Anne Rodgers