

Manage your migraines  
with help from this friendly guide

# Migraines

FOR

# DUMMIES®

**Diane Stafford**

*Health writer and migraine sufferer*

**Jennifer Shoquist, MD**

*Family practice physician*



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# ***Migraines For Dummies***<sup>®</sup>

**by Diane Stafford and  
Jennifer Shoquist, MD**



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# About the Authors

**Diane Stafford:** The co-author of *Migraines For Dummies*, Diane Stafford knows the subject of migraines personally, having lived with headaches lifelong and having grown up in a family of migraine sufferers — sister, brother, and father. Her experiences provided helpful insight on the many challenges that migraineurs face at home, at work, and at play. In this book, she shares numerous ideas for headache management. Diane’s main reason for writing this book is the belief that it will help other migraine sufferers lead more fulfilling lives.

Despite migraines, Diane Stafford has been a high-energy writer and magazine editor for twenty-five years. She has served as editor-in-chief of *Houston Health & Fitness Magazine*, *Dallas-Fort Worth Health & Fitness Magazine*, *Texas Woman Magazine*, *Houston Home & Garden*, *Dallas-Fort Worth Home & Garden*, and *Philanthropy in Texas*. Also an entrepreneur, Stafford co-owned Health & Fitness and helped with startups of the magazine in New Orleans, Philadelphia, and Atlanta. She has written hundreds of articles. She now edits books for Arte Publico Press in Houston and writes books.

Stafford lives with her husband, David Garrett, in Houston, where she is a well-known writer and a community volunteer for Casa de Esperanza de los Ninos and the Emergency Aid Coalition Clothes Center.

Diane Stafford and Jennifer Shoquist (Stafford's daughter) have also co-authored *Potty Training For Dummies* (Wiley Publishing), *No More Panic Attacks: A 30-Day Plan for Conquering Anxiety* (New Page Books), and *The Encyclopedia of Sexually Transmitted Diseases* (to be published by Facts on File, Inc. in 2003).

**Jennifer Shoquist, MD:** Evaluating and treating patients' headaches is a staple of family practice doctors, and that has also been the case for Dr. Jennifer Shoquist, who teamed up with health writer Diane Stafford to write *Migraines For Dummies* — a book that ambitiously tackles every facet of migraine living, from choosing medications to understanding dietary and exercise triggers to handling people who think your headaches are “in your head.”

Jennifer's interest in writing began when she was attending the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, while also interning at *Health & Fitness Magazine* in Houston, Texas. Later, she completed her medical degree at the University of Texas Medical School at Houston, followed by family practice residency at Memorial Southwest Hospital.

Today, she writes books and serves as a health-issues resource for journalists. She and her husband, Robert San Luis, live in Houston with their son, Benjamin (born during the course of writing this book), and two shih-tzus, Lucy and Sophie.

# Dedication

To Allen, Camilla, and Clinton, who never let migraines slow them down. To migraine sufferers everywhere, our fondest wishes that you will find excellent relief from your headache pain. And, finally, we dedicate this book to the newest member of our clan: baby Ben.

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# Introduction

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About 28 million Americans have migraine headaches. And, if you're one of them, you know all too well that it's hard to predict what a day will hold. Any morning, afternoon, or evening, you may find yourself in the throes of mind-boggling pain, not to mention nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to loud noises.

So, you've gotten fairly expert at composing migraine metaphors:

My head's getting pounded by unfriendly fire.

Contortionists are busting a move in my skull.

Descriptive words just pop out, borne of disbelief that you could actually be hurting so badly.

As a matter of fact, migraines have been driving people nuts forever. Ancient "caregivers" bored holes in people's heads to try to relieve headache pain. Egyptians tied an herb-stuffed clay crocodile to an aching head.

Yet despite a history of being guinea pigs and a yen for spicy metaphors, migraine sufferers remain optimistic. Migraines hurt and can be very disabling, so bring on the remedies!

Knowledge is a powerful weapon in any fight and, in this book, we aim to arm you with the tools you need to whip your migraines into submission.

# About This Book

Serving as a reference book for people who want to transition from being hamstrung by headaches to developing high-level pain-busting savvy, *Migraines For Dummies* has parts that are set up as freestanding units. You can peruse each one separately, and feel no urgency about reading chapters or parts in order. After scanning the Table of Contents, zero in on those topics that interest you most, and later, you can turn back to the others.

To tame the migraine beast, you must acknowledge the formidable creature. Denying what you are dealing with does not help. *Migraines For Dummies* provides headache information that helps you understand what you're up against — and a list of remedies effective enough to merit high-roller status in any migraine circle in the world.

*Migraines For Dummies* offers hope, with a focused, fleshed-out program that works in the real world. Headache medications have their place in the picture, but you absolutely can do more.

The quest for answers — and the pilgrimage to a better health place — is at the core of this book. Essentially, *Migraines for Dummies* will benefit people who want to improve their lives. If you have migraines regularly, you know how devastating they can be. Sometimes, just the thought of making plans seems pointless — what if you

get a headache? Friends may think that you're just making excuses to get out of going somewhere. Better not take a chance. So you grow afraid to venture too far from the safety of home base.

In *Migraines For Dummies*, we look at the whole spectrum of the problem, from dealing with the number-one issue of pain relief to handling peripheral problems: absences from work, skepticism from friends, and impact on family. The authors also investigate women's hormonal headaches, stress- as-a-factor in headaches, children's migraines, seniors' head troubles, sex headaches, and sleep-habit demons.

## Questions answered

The migraine mob needs health advocates. And we, the authors of *Migraines For Dummies*, fill that role, offering valuable tips on ways to eliminate the fisticuffs going on inside your head in the wacky world of managed health care. *Migraines For Dummies* hands you a gilded invitation to join a proactive group of migraine-busters. Via this book, we provide answers to the following pressing questions:

- ✓ How can you know that you have migraines and not some other kind of headache?
- ✓ Can your headaches be migraines if you don't have the visual disturbances you've heard are the benchmark sign of a migraine?

- ✔ Who's the right doctor for diagnosing and treating your headaches?
- ✔ Is there any way to get rid of a migraine once it moves in and sets up camp?
- ✔ Do remedies like biofeedback or hypnosis really help the pain?
- ✔ How can you find the medication that will provide full-fledged pain relief?
- ✔ How can you deal with family and work issues when people really don't understand how debilitating migraines can be?

Truly, because of its complexity, migraine-busting must be considered an extreme sport. You need a concrete headache-management plan, and you need it pronto.

## **Solutions offered**

Check out the many things that *Migraines For Dummies* can do for you:

- ✔ Help you take charge of your headache fate: You don't have to be at the mercy of migraines. You can pave the way to a more headache-free existence. We show you how.
- ✔ Foster a team approach: You can get your mate and children on board, fill in your work supervisor, and cope ably with all of those in your universe whose support can be invaluable during headache episodes.

- ✓ Separate fact from fiction: No, migraines aren't fantasies; they're located in your head, all right, but they're not "all in your head," as some unsympathetic folks may tell you. We sort through the myths and misconceptions.
- ✓ Steer your pain-shedding and migraine-handling: You'll master the technique of warding off a headache, if possible; if not, you'll bash it after it gets going. You'll figure out what to do — and, just as important, what *not* to do.
- ✓ Show you how to stay on message: We get you feeling powerful about conquering migraines and keep you on track by providing answers.
- ✓ Prepare you for all scenarios: From finding out how to function during a migraine haze, to handling health insurance questions, to deciding whether to go to work or school with a headache, we address common problems that migraineurs face.

## Caution given

This book contains our opinions and ideas. We intend to provide helpful information on migraines, but we don't offer professional medical, health, or any other kind of personal services via the book.



This is a supplement, not a replacement, for medical advice from your personal healthcare provider. In no way does reading this book replace the need for an evaluation by a physician.

If you want or need personal advice or guidance, please consult a medical, health, or other competent professional — especially if you have a condition that may require medical diagnosis or attention — before adopting any of the suggestions in the book or drawing inferences from the information given.

## Foolish Assumptions

Because you picked up this book, we assume a few things about you:

✓ You think that you have migraines, know that you have migraines, or live with, and love, someone with migraines.

You're familiar with the debilitating factor, and you're looking for ideas that will be inspiring, instructive, and winning. You're putting your migraine history and its frustrations behind you. Now you want to venture into the new and promising era of *Migraines For Dummies*. You're saying, "Hit me with your best shot, 'cause I've got nowhere to go but up!"

✓ You may have yet to find a remedy that gets rid of your head pain.

✓ You find the entire migraine problem and its related issues (work, family, public skepticism) somewhat daunting. This idea alone, not to mention the incredible pain, may have inspired you to pick up this book.

✔ You're baffled, unsure of what to do and when to do it — when to take an over-the counter remedy, when to resort to a prescription drug, or whether to try alternative or complementary treatments.

✔ We half-assume that you inherited the migraine tendency, because these headaches run in families.

If you grew up with a parent who had migraines, you're all too familiar with how this 'disability' can alter family plans and dynamics (can you say Bleak House?).

✔ Our biggest assumption is that you're itching to discover ways to get rid of migraine pain, and we think that you can definitely find what you need in this book. We present clear and comprehensive information about all aspects of migraines, along with tips, encouragement, and reassurance.