



## Migraine Care in the time of COVID-19

Our thoughts and thanks are with the individual clinicians, healthcare professionals and members of the public on the front line managing the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, as well as those keeping themselves and the rest of the public safe by social distancing.

While there is only limited research on COVID-19, there is no evidence that patients with migraine who are otherwise healthy are at any increased risk. Despite this, we are aware that the disruption of daily life and increased stress during the pandemic may lead to a transient worsening of migraine symptoms for some people.

The ANZHS has collated the following resources in order to help you stay safe and continue to care for your migraines in this challenging time, and how

### Accessing Healthcare

If you have concerns regarding your health, your specialist and local doctor remain available to help. Many hospitals and practices are transitioning to telehealth and phone and you may be able to access these services, measures are also being taken to reduce the risk to both practitioners and patients if a physical appointment is required. Utilisation of your specialist and general practitioner is preferential to reduce the burden, and risk of exposure of presentation to emergency departments.

Several steps you can take with your treating clinician include:

- Optimise your acute reliever medication, remembering not to exceed 10 days per month of use
- Start a preventative medication, and take it regularly. There are no shortages of preventative medications in Australia or New Zealand, so having one-month supply at home is fine.
- Be mindful of your routine, and continue to optimise your lifestyle to avoid migraine triggers during this stressful time.
- Speak to your treating clinician if things aren't working. There are a variety of things that may be tried that do not involve hospital presentation. If all else fails or you have concerns, the doctors at your ED are still there to help.

### Managing Migraine in Isolation

As more of us are required to isolate and work from home, it is natural that there will be some disruption to our daily routine. For those with migraine, the brain is particularly sensitive to change, and extra care should be taken to ensure you are doing what you can to maintain a regular daily routine in order to manage your migraine. Simple things include:

- Go for a regular walk or run. Regular exercise is important in managing migraine, stress and anxiety. Current Australian and New Zealand government guidelines allow daily outdoor exercise as long as you maintain social distancing.
- Maintain a healthy cycle for both sleep and diet. Avoid skipping meals, or adjusting your sleeping habits. The brain likes routine, and maintaining your circadian rhythm is important through regular sleep, natural light and avoiding screens and devices in the hours before bed.
- Pay attention to your posture. Transitioning to work from home leads to new challenges with regards to the ergonomics of your workplace, and a risk of more time spent sedentary on the couch. Ensure that you are standing and stretching regularly, and set your desk up as best you can.
- Stay hydrated. Maintaining adequate hydration is important for managing migraine, and may require special attention if you are no longer leaving the house. Avoid using alcohol as a way of managing your stress as this can further exacerbate migraine.

### Managing Stress

For those that suffer from migraine, stress and anxiety can increase the likelihood of an attack. Practising self-care, and maintaining your through alternate ways of social interaction, such as messaging and video calls is paramount. Turning off the news, accepting the current uncertainty and practising mindfulness can be a powerful way of dealing with the current climate.

If you have any concerns, you can reach out to your local mental health practitioner, who may be able to provide telehealth support, or access any of the resources below:

- Accessing online support and counselling through a trusted organisation such as headspace. <https://www.headspace.com/covid-19>
- Any of the mindfulness apps available on your app store. One good resource is the UCLA mindful app. <https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/ucla-mindful-app>
- Practise mindfulness and relaxation techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation. <https://www.uofmhealth.org/health-library/uz2225>

### Stay Safe

Both to protect yourself, your family as well as the health and wellbeing of the community and those workers who cannot isolate in order to provide front line care during this pandemic, it is important to follow government guidelines. Practice social distancing, staying at home whenever possible. If you have to go out, maintain 2m of distance and maintain good hand hygiene with regular hand washing or sanitiser, and avoid touching your face. Together, we can help reduce the impact of the pandemic and save lives.