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## New Treatments for Migraines

Migraines are intensely painful, throbbing, recurrent headaches, often accompanied by nausea/vomiting and extreme sensitivity to light and sound. Traditionally treated with painkillers and rest, newer drugs (Triptans) are aimed at aborting headaches by promoting vasoconstriction while blocking pain pathways. More recently, devices utilizing nerve stimulation technology are being used to manage these debilitating headaches.

### Head Band Treatment

A device for treating migraines via stimulation of the occipital cortex has received approval in the USA. The Cerena Transcranial Magnetic Stimulator is a band applied to the back of the head – 38 percent of users were pain-free after 2 hours. Also being studied is an implant which stimulates both the occipital and supraorbital nerves resulting in 70 percent of patients experiencing up to 80 percent improvement! More to come!

### TENS Device to Prevent Migraines

The Cefaly TENS device is used to prevent migraines. The band is worn across the forehead once daily for 20 minutes and delivers stimulation to the trigeminal nerve. Two European studies found that users experienced significantly fewer migraines per month and used less migraine medication – although the migraines they did experience were no less intense. The satisfaction rate was 53 percent.

### Drug Treatment

A group in Norway is looking at a hypertension drug, called candesartan, as preventative therapy for migraines. Patients were given 16 mg of candesartan daily for 12 weeks and 43 percent of patients experienced at least a 50 percent reduction in the number of migraines. The medication was well-tolerated – side-effects were typically dizziness or tiredness... but, happily, not the weight gain seen with other migraine preventers!

Lifestyle and stress management are also important factors in managing migraines. Keeping a good diary of attacks and symptoms can play a key role in identifying triggers as well. Talk to your pharmacist for advice.