

Ergotamines

Examples: Cafergot, DHE



Used To Treat: Migraine headache

How They Work: These drugs actually cause vasoconstriction. While that might seem to make a migraine worse, it is thought that their mechanism of action doesn't cause the release of the inflammatory agents that are actually the "cause" of the migraine.

Side Effects: The ergotamines may make the nausea and vomiting of a migraine worse. They should not be taken in persons with Glaucoma and they should not be taken along with triptans.

Ergotamines



What is Migraine?

Migraine is a headache that is particularly disabling and thought to be genetic. The headache is often located on one side of the head. We used to separate migraine from simple headache but have come to learn that they may be a similar problem on a spectrum. The simple headache might evolve into a migraine and vice-versa. Similarly a tension headache may evolve into something resembling a migraine.

Migraines may be preceded by an "aura" that is specific to the patient. The aura could be a funny smell, a visual disturbance, a sound or even just a funny feeling. They are often accompanied by nausea, vomiting and photophobia, prompting the need for a quiet room.

Patients may refer to a trigger, which could be a smell, a change in the weather, the ingestion of a specific food, or a time of the month. Women often notice that migraines happen immediately prior to their menstrual cycle.

Migraines were once thought to be vascular or caused by a spasm of a blood vessel. This is now known to not be consistent in all patients. The newest literature suggests that migraines are a "brain" problem.

What is consistent is that migraines can be horribly debilitating and should be taken seriously and treated aggressively.