

Ocular Migraine: Understanding Visual Disturbances and Headache Symptoms

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DESCRIPTION

An ocular migraine, also known as retinal migraine or visual migraine, refers to a rare type of migraine headache that primarily affects the visual system, leading to temporary visual disturbances or even vision loss in one eye. Unlike a typical migraine, which is commonly associated with headache pain, ocular migraines may occur without a headache or may present with visual symptoms before the onset of a headache. The condition is generally benign, but its symptoms can be unsettling and disruptive, particularly when vision is temporarily affected.

Ocular migraine

An ocular migraine is a type of migraine that involves visual disturbances that are typically experienced in one eye. These visual disturbances are a result of changes in the blood flow to the eye or the brain areas responsible for processing visual information. The term "ocular" refers to the eye, but some cases may involve temporary visual symptoms that affect the field of vision in both eyes.

There are two main categories of ocular migraines:

Retinal migraine (migraine with visual aura): This is a rare form of ocular migraine where visual disturbances occur due to changes in blood flow to the retina of one eye. The symptoms can be quite dramatic and might include partial or complete vision loss in the affected eye, often followed by a headache.

Visual aura without headache: Some individuals experience the visual disturbances associated with a migraine (known as an aura) without the subsequent headache. These visual changes can last for a few minutes and are typically benign, although they can be alarming to the person experiencing them.

Symptoms of ocular migraines

Ocular migraines typically present with visual disturbances that can last anywhere from a few minutes to 30 minutes, and may or may not be followed by a headache. The symptoms are often transient, and vision typically returns to normal once the episode resolves. Common symptoms include:

Visual aura: The visual disturbances in ocular migraine often start as a flickering or shimmering light or a blind spot in the field of vision. These disturbances can progress into patterns that may resemble jagged or zigzag lines, flashes of light, or a shimmering or "wavy" effect across the vision. This is known as the "visual aura."

Temporary vision loss: In some cases, there may be a temporary loss of vision in one eye, which can last for a few minutes. The vision loss may be partial or complete and can be alarming, though it usually resolves quickly.

Headache (Sometimes): A typical ocular migraine is often followed by a headache, although this does not always occur. The headache, if it develops, may be a standard migraine headache, characterized by a throbbing, pulsating pain, often on one side of the head. The headache can last anywhere from a few hours to a couple of days.

Flashing lights or blind spots: The visual disturbances may begin with flashing lights or blind spots in the field of vision. These spots may grow in size and affect a larger portion of the visual field, though vision usually returns to normal once the migraine resolves.

Nausea and sensitivity to light: As with other types of migraines, nausea and sensitivity to light (photophobia) or sound (phonophobia) can accompany ocular migraines, particularly if a headache develops after the visual symptoms.

CONCLUSION

Ocular migraines, while often temporary and benign, can be a distressing experience due to the visual disturbances they cause. Understanding the potential triggers and symptoms of ocular migraines is important for proper management and prevention. For those experiencing frequent or severe ocular migraines, it is important to consult with a healthcare provider to explore treatment options and reduce the impact of these episodes on daily life. With appropriate care, most individuals with ocular migraines can manage their symptoms and prevent future occurrences.

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