

Migraines & Other HEADACHES

Real Men DO Take Aspirin

"Cluster headaches feature pain so severe that victims are sometimes driven to suicide for relief."

uestion: What do basketball superstar Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, composer Peter Tchaikovsky, psychiatric pioneer Sigmund Freud and Founding Father Thomas Jefferson have in common? Answer: Besides being famous and being men, all are past or present victims of severe and disabling migraine headaches.

Although generations of standup comics have milked the old line, "Not tonight, dear, I have a headache," for all it's worth, migraines and other headaches are **not** for women only. The fact is that men and women share the malady almost equally.

According to Dr. Mark Green, a neurologist on the faculty of the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City, migraines affect women over men at only a 3 to 2 ratio, while men hold a huge 9 to 1 edge when it comes to what he terms the "Cadillac" of head pain, the cluster headache.

Migraines, caused by contraction and dilation of the blood vessels in the head, produce the most suffering for the most people. Ordinary headaches, which are mild by comparison, are caused by simple tightening of scalp and neck muscles.

"If you have ever had a real migraine, you know it," says Dr. Green. "Symptoms other than pain are present, such as nausea and sensitivity to light and smells. Every system in the body can be affected, with victims often prostrated."

The underlying cause of migraine headaches is now known to be genetic. Migraines often begin in early childhood, where the 3 to 2 ratio is reversed in favor of males. But more boys than girls seem to "outgrow" them or don't seek treatment as adults.

As sufferers know, migraines have two stages. First, blood vessels constrict. There is no pain in this stage but, instead, something called an "aura." In the second stage, blood vessels dilate and actual pain begins.

Migraine auras are important because they warn that an attack is on the way. Typical auras include visual blind spots, flashing lights, dizziness, weakness, mood changes, sensitivity to light and sound, motion sickness and perceived changes in sizes and shapes of objects.

Migraine attacks are usually brought on by certain "triggers" which differ from person to person. In women, one of the most common is the normal drop in the level of hormones right before menstruation. In men, attacks are likely to be caused by stress, too much sleep or missing meals. Some foods and food additives like MSG, as well as caffeine and chocolate are other common triggers for men and women.

"It's interesting that migraines tend to strike more often during weekends and vacations," says Dr. Green. "Weekend migraines are usually related to food, alcohol and too much sleep, while vacation migraines can stem from the same things plus the stress of getting away."

often head them off. New drugs used for prevention, such as Inderal, are very effective. Ergotamine, a blood vessel constrictor, works well once the migraine is actually underway. Percodan is sometimes used in the most severe cases, but is an addictive narcotic and a "last resort" type of treatment.

Although new ways to help migraine victims find relief are now available, the man afflicted with cluster headaches is not nearly so fortunate.

"We still don't know what triggers this type of headache," says Dr. Green. "We think it may be caused by a biochemical imbalance in the brain stem. We **do** know it's not genetic."

Cluster headaches, which cause an excruciating, knife-like one-sided pain around the eye, cheek, or upper teeth, are accompanied by a running nose, watery eye, and constricted pupil. Unlike the migraine victim, who wants to remain quiet, cluster headache sufferers cannot stay still. "They twist, turn, pace, and even bang their heads against walls," says Dr. Green. "The suicide rate among cluster patients is high because the pain is so terribly severe."

The only good thing to be said about cluster headaches is that they are less common and do not strike as frequently as migraine or muscle contraction headaches. Remissions are frequent and six months to a year can elapse between sieges, which usually last anywhere from one-half to two or three hours.

"Fortunately, the vast majority of headaches are the ordinary kind that respond well to aspirin, Tylenol, relaxation and scalp and neck massage," Dr. Green says. "But if you have chronic headaches causing intractable pain, don't treat yourself. Get professional help, because most can be relieved."

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BY CHARLES A. SHORTER



"HOLD THAT HOME"

"Blacks have too often sold their property for too little"

ome years ago I studied the history of the deplorable loss of farmland owned by Blacks in the South. The historical records showed that Blacks gave up thousands of acres of valuable land without receiving fair value. There is a parallel situation today in major cities. The situation sometimes dubbed "gentrifications" or "displacement," but the real meaning is that Blacks are disappearing from whole sections of a city and loosing out on opportunities to benefit from the wealth in their properties.

This is not a new situation. Loss of valuable homes and property has been going on for many, many years. I still recall my admiring wanderings through Georgetown in Washington, D.C. with my father, listening to his stories of the way it was in the 1920's when the Blacks owned it all and decent folk were afraid of that section of town. And Georgetown has been repeated over and over again all over the United States—Philadelphia, New York, Los Angeles, Boston and San Francisco. Ask any Philadelphian about Society Hill or a Bostonian about Tremont Street, or a San Franciscan about the Filmore

Now, the reasons for this loss of property and wealth are varied and complex. The principal reason, however, is that Blacks have too often sold their property for too little—"given it away"—without realizing either the existing value or the potential value of their property. If that simple realization can be grasped and then acted upon, this exclusionary and losing trend can be reversed.

Here are some basic guidelines which may prevent you from regretting having sold out too soon for too little. The last thing you want to do is return to the old homestead five years from now to see property that you sold for \$50,000 selling for over \$500,000. And if you can hold on to the property and make money, you are in an even smarter real estate situation.

1. Never, but never sell your property to the first (or second) bidder without taking a good, long look at the local real estate market. Ask yourself, "how have housing prices in your neighborhood changed over the past five years, in surrounding neighborhoods, in your town or city?"

2. Talk to local brokers who are established, who know the market and who deal with the top of the real estate market. Don't be shy. All brokers like to make deals; that's how

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they make money. All brokers like to give advice; that's how they make a sale.

3. Talk to real estate experts, appraisers, real estate developers, the local bank, even friends and relatives, but always go with the most optimistic advice and highest prices. Remember: real estate is wealth in the United States, and always has been.

4. Consider paying for expert advice. Use a good lawyer. If you don't have one, get one—with solid real estate experience. If you can make \$200,000 on a deal, the up-front costs will be worth paying, and those costs should be minimal.

5. You don't have to sell. Consider leasing. If you have to move and need money, take out a mortgage (equity loan) against your property, then lease for enough to cover the loan. You get cash and keep the property for the day when it is worth more.

6. Consider using your property as equity, or your portion of an investment, in a potential development. Your property may be in an area which developers believe to be a growth market—"a hot area." If so, you may want to participate in that potential with the developer. You own the land. It's called, "Let's make a deal."

7. Talk to other owners in your area about how they feel about selling or developing. Have they had offers? For how much? Can you join together to take advantage of your combined equities, the growth market, your need to hold on to your property while prices increase?

8. Consider using the value of your property to acquire other properties in your neighborhood. Buy this year, sell next year. There is a very strong possibility.

9. Never sell unless the price is right, really right, and if possible not even then.

Now, these guidelines are not offered to make you wealthy. But if all of the Blacks who owned homes and other forms of property were to follow some of these guidelines, Black family income and wealth (defined as including all assets) would increase dramatically. Most importantly, we and our children will not be left back only to watch whole sections of cities become exclusive and devoid of Black ownership. Put another way, there is no reason that the "return to urban living" and "gentrification" cannot be major trends on which Black owners can capitalize. Harlem need not become Georgetown.