

Migraine increases risk of severe skin sensitivity and pain

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People with migraine are more likely to experience exacerbated skin sensitivity or pain after non-painful daily activities such as rubbing one's head, combing one's hair and wearing necklaces or earrings, compared to people with other types of headache, according to a study published in the April 22, 2008, issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

Researchers surveyed 16,573 people with headache about their type of headache, frequency, quality of life, depression and other illnesses that cause pain. The survey identified 11,737 participants with migraine, 1,491 with probable migraine (individuals have all but one of the symptoms required for migraine diagnosis) and 3,345 with another kind of headache.

The study found that 68 percent of those who reported almost daily headaches (chronic migraine) and 63 percent of those with episodic migraines reported allodynia, the name of this intensified and unpleasant, painful skin sensitivity. Forty-two percent of people with probable migraine reported the skin pain compared to 37 percent of those with daily or tension headache.

“This condition causes discomfort or pain even during everyday activities like touching one's hair or putting on clothes,” said study author Marcelo E. Bigal, MD, PhD, with Albert Einstein College of Medicine in Bronx, NY. “More importantly, this condition may be a risk factor for migraine progression, where individuals have migraines on

more days than not. Identifying risk factors for progression is a very important public health priority. For example, it may be that individuals with allodynia should be more aggressively treated in order to prevent migraine progression, as well as to decrease this sensitivity on the skin.”

The study also found this type of skin pain was more common in women with migraine and people with migraine who were obese or had depression.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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