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LIFESTYLE

**“I HAVE A** splitting headache”. Be it your colleague at work or your spouse at home, this is probably one of the most often heard complaint today.

Doctors blame lifestyle changes and stress for this literally gnawing headache and say that women suffer more than men.

At the very outset, it's important to know the difference between a headache and a migraine.

“Headache is a pain in the head region, while migraine is a type of headache. Migraine is not a disease but a syndrome. One should know that not every headache is a migraine, but a migraine can be termed as a headache,” P.N. Renjen, senior consultant, neurology, at the Apollo Hospital, said. Migraine is usually accompanied by a throbbing headache, photophobia and vomiting.

According to Renjen, around 30 per cent of the patients he sees every day are cases related to headache and migraine.

“Women are more prone to headache and migraine because of hormonal changes in their body and the stress and strain of daily life,” he said. Erratic meal timings and a bad sleep cycle are contributing factors.

“Around 75 per cent of migraine sufferers are women,” Manoj Khannal, consultant, neurology, at Max Hospital, Shalimar Bagh, said. “Although the incidence of migraine is similar in boys

# A pain in the head

**Rising stress is causing more headaches with women more prone to it than men**

and girls during childhood, it increases in girls after puberty. Migraine most commonly affects women in the age group of 20-45 years.”

“Fluctuation of female hormones like estrogen and progesterone appear to increase the risk of migraine and its severity in some women. About half the women with migraine report headaches associated with their menstrual cycle. For some women, migraines also tend to be worse during the first trimester of their pregnancy, but improve during the last trimester,” he added.

Warning against popping of pills at the drop of a hat, Rajashekhar Reddi, consultant in the neurology department

of Max healthcare, said that too much medication can itself cause you a headache.

“It is not advisable to frequently pop pills. Too much medication can cause medication-overuse headache,” he said. Too much of painkillers can also harm the kidneys and other organs.

Migraine can be controlled. Khannal talked about one of his patients, a 35-year-old woman who came to him complaining of a throbbing headache for the last 10 years. “We started her on anti-migraine medications and after reaching the adequate dose of prophylactic medications, her migraine was treated. She is headache-free for the last two months.”

Neurologists, however, advise to watch out for symptoms that may indicate health complications beyond a headache or migraine attack.

Renjen gave the example of one of his patients, a 40-year-old woman who came to him complaining of a headache on one side of her head and of migraine. “Migraine is more common among those in the age bracket of 20-25 years, so we sent her for some tests. Her MRI scan revealed a clot in the brain,” he said.

The advice, therefore? Try to lead a stress-free life, eat and sleep well and, when in pain, go to the doctor instead of frequently popping painkillers. IANS

## ALIGN YOUR LIFE

### A Walk in the Moonlight

**THE MOON HAS** always been associated with peace and calm. Many spiritual practices all over the world have their own interpretations of the moon energy. The effects of the various phases of the moon in connection to human brain have been the subject of many documented experiments and research papers. However in many cultural celebrations full or new moon holds a special meaning.

I first came across the concept of moon energy while studying feng shui. The symbol of yin and yang represents two aspects of life: the yang represents masculine or the strong side while the yin represents passive or the feminine side. Solar or sun energy is the essence of yang while moon energy is part of yin. The main aim of the study of feng shui is to balance the yin and the yang. Similarly in the science of astrology, a lot of importance has been placed on the placement of moon and how it can affect the human mind. However what most people don't know is that anyone can benefit positively from the moon energy by doing simple meditations on a daily basis.

As the heat wave is gripping the UAE and your mind is exhausted, the best way to remain calm is to practice a simple full moon meditation that can easily transport you to a more relaxing place and help you combat the inner heat. What is great about full moon meditation is that it can be practiced on any day and you don't need to wait for a full moon to enjoy the experience. By following a few simple steps, you will experience first hand how to combat heat with a unique and imaginative meditation.

Find a quiet corner in your home. Energise the corner by lighting scented incense or aromatherapy candles. You can choose to lie down or sit in this corner for the meditation. Once you are comfortable and relaxed, close your eyes and slow down your breathing by taking a few very deep breaths. Taking deep breaths will help in slowing down your thoughts and cool down your body heat. Once you feel your body loosening up, it's time to move forward.

Visualise yourself walking in a beautiful garden while soaking up the moonlight. You can visualise any type of garden you wish - it could have flowers, green grass and luscious trees. Take a few minutes to walk around in this garden until you find a spot to relax. Then lie down on your back in this visualisation and feel the moonlight penetrating your body and calming the mind. Take as much time as you want to enjoy this unique and simple visualisation. Once you feel you have relaxed and feel at ease, you can open your eyes and resume other activities.

There are many ways to beat the heat - you can make dietary changes, start doing yoga or simply go for a swim. But the most unique and powerful way to deal with the soaring temperatures is to take a long walk in the moonlight and feel the instant calm that will last for many hours to come.

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