

## Migraine Headaches and Karen H.

I've gotten migraine headaches about three or four times a month for my entire life. There would be this intense throbbing behind my right eyeball, in my temples, a neck ache, and nausea. Doctors didn't diagnose these headaches as migraines because I didn't see "auras"—the white light migraine sufferers typically see. I also was not sensitive to light and I did not need to go into a dark room. Only when I was in my 50s, was I told they were migraines.

So when I was young I just called them "my headaches" and took codeine to lessen the pain. When I was 29 years old, I had one so bad that it sent me to the emergency room at the local hospital. I was vomiting, the pain was excruciating, and I thought, "Nobody has headaches like this." I asked my friend to drive me to the emergency room. They treated me with a muscle relaxant and Valium. The next day I just soldiered on and went to work.

The second time I went to the emergency room with a migraine, one of the doctors said it was a severe sinus headache, and he recommended nose surgery. I did have nose surgery and it didn't do a thing.

The third time a migraine sent me to the hospital, the doctors wouldn't let me leave without doing a spinal tap on me. My symptoms were nearly identical to what you see in people who are about to have a stroke, an aneurysm, or who have spinal meningitis. That gives you an idea of how severe the migraines were.

I was told the headaches might go away after menopause, but they didn't. When menopause failed to give me relief, I finally went to see a neurosurgeon. My headaches were diagnosed as migraines and I was given two medications that finally helped. He gave me Inderal and Imitrex. The Inderal reduced the frequency of the headaches to once every six weeks or so, which was a blessing. Whenever I did feel a headache coming on, I would self-inject the Imitrex, which would stop the progression and leave me without pain.

Naturally, I was grateful for this relief after all those years of suffering. But I would later find out that Inderal and Imitrex were just masking the pain, not getting to the cause of it.

Meanwhile, I stopped smoking. The combination of stopping smoking and going through menopause caused me to gain 50 pounds. This was scary to me. I had always been pretty close to the weight I wanted to be. I was one of those Twiggy-generation people who was always trying to lose 10 pounds—you can never be quite thin enough— but, generally speaking, I didn't have a weight problem. But once I had gained the 50 pounds I was scared. I looked matronly, felt old, and I didn't know whether I would ever be able to lose this weight.

I heard a friend talking about Dr. Platt, and she spoke so highly of him that I decided to go to him for weight loss.

I went to see him and we talked for an hour. I was comfortable with him, and I was fascinated that he's a traditionally trained M.D. who has a philosophy that crosses over into alternative medicine. He told me he could eliminate my migraine headaches and that losing the 50 pounds would be just the icing on the cake.

He put me on progesterone, thyroid medication, and DHEA and started weaning me off the Inderal as well as the HRT my gynecologist had put me on at menopause.

At some point during the weaning from Inderal I had a terrible, terrible night when I couldn't put my head on a pillow because my head hurt so much. It wasn't like a migraine; it was like every one of my hairs hurt my scalp. If I touched my hair, my scalp was in agony. I spent the night sitting up, catching whatever sleep I could, and the next morning I called Dr. Platt's office and went to see him.

He told me what was happening—that I was getting my nerve endings back. The drugs I'd been taking had numbed them, and now they were coming back to life. He told me the symptoms would be gone within 36 hours, and he was right. It is now 20 months since I first saw Dr. Platt, and I have not had a single migraine headache.

It was also the easiest weight loss I have ever experienced. I stuck to the diet religiously and the pounds just melted off. I lost eight pounds the first week and about three pounds every successive week. I started in September and by Thanksgiving I had lost 32 pounds. I felt great, I wasn't hungry, and I wasn't getting headaches! At Thanksgiving I went off the diet because I had tons of guests and relatives coming in for the holidays, and my passion is cooking for people. But I plan to go back on the diet at some point to lose the last 18 pounds.

The weight I lost was a different kind of 32 pounds—I can't quite explain it, but I had this feeling that I was losing stored-up fat from a long time ago. There is a different definition to my body. It looks and feels different.