

Name:
 Title: A Migraine Message
 Specific Purpose: To inform my audience about migraine headaches.
 Thesis: Migraines significantly affect college students.
 Preview: Let's conduct a pain-staking examination of the symptoms of migraines, explore the common causes of the headaches, and determine possible treatments.
 Organization: Categorical
 Date:

Introduction:

- I. "I get really nauseous and the pain goes throughout my head and neck and down into my shoulders" (Blankenship).
 - A. This is how one college freshman described his experience with migraines, which began "a little over a year ago," when "school was really stressful" (Blankenship).
 - B. These migraines begin after "a significant period of stress, when [he starts] losing sleep and the stress starts to catch up with [him]" (Blankenship).
- II. Another freshman stated that, during her first migraine, she was "very light sensitive" and that the pain was located at "the back of [her] head and spine and [her] eyes," making her "nauseous, sweaty, and shaky" (Horvat).
- III. Their experiences are not uncommon; the August 2007 issue of *Neurology Reviews* interviewed Benjamin W. Friedman, the Assistant Professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine at Albert Einstein College of Medicine who stated that: "Headache is the fifth most common emergency department complaint, accounting for up to five million visits to American Emergency Departments on an annual basis" (Cerruto).
- IV. While migraines are a topic that has been researched for years, scientists are continually making new advances in the study of these headaches.
- V. Whether or not you have personally experienced a migraine, you as a college student are at risk; 50% of our class has experienced a migraine at one point in their lives.
- VI. Let's conduct a pain-staking examination of the symptoms of migraines, explore the common causes of the headaches, and determine possible treatments.

(It's time to put our brains to work and discover what, exactly, a migraine is.)

Body:

- I. Nearly everyone has had a headache, but how does a migraine distinguish itself from a common headache?

(The location of a migraine's pain is different, and the sufferer may also experience nausea, sensitivity to light and sound, and visual auras.)

- A. Not only are migraines a more severe pain, but these headaches also come with other symptoms not associated with day-to-day head pain.

1. The August 2007 issue of *Harvard Health Letter* states that, while tension headaches cause pain all over one's head, a migraine is a more intense pain that is on only one side of the head and generally located near one's temple (Migraines).
 2. Likewise, as Jenny Hope writes in a May 2007 issue of *The Daily Mail*, migraine headaches tend to induce "dizziness, nausea, and sensitivity to light and sound."
- B. In addition to increased pain, migraines can also lead to visual auras.
1. In the September 2007 edition of *Express and Echo*, visual auras are defined as "blind spots in the vision" or "flashing lights" (Migraine).
 2. My mother, who has been suffering from chronic migraines since she was in college, experiences these auras with her headaches (Matas).
 - a. She says that the first stage of a visual aura is a loss of portion of one's vision; instead, all that can be seen is white light (Matas).
 - b. This light then becomes a jagged line that moves like a snake throughout one's line of vision, expanding as it moves to the outermost corner of one's eye before disappearing (Matas).
 3. Julio Pascal wrote in a 2004 issue of *Headache: The Journal of Head and Face Pain* that visual auras can last up to an hour and affect approximately 15% of migraine sufferers.

(It's clear that migraines are not an enjoyable experience; let's put our heads together and study what causes a migraine.)

- II. While a migraine is technically the result of physical changes within one's brain, a person's lifestyle can put one at an increased risk of migraines as well and cause these changes to take place.

(A migraine occurs when the blood vessels in one's head expand and contract; this can be brought on by certain foods that we college students love to eat.)

- A. While no one scientist holds the answer, an August 2007 issue of *The Globe and Mail* notes that chemical and electric problems in the brain are generally the cause of migraines (Pinpointing).
1. The article states that the neurotransmitter portion of one's brain may play a role by narrowing one's arteries; this interferes with the blood flowing to one's head, possibly resulting in a migraine (Pinpointing).
 2. The previously cited article from the *Harvard Health Letter* agrees with this theory, stating that the change in size of the blood vessels can also affect a person's pain sensory nerves (Migraines).
- B. Unfortunately for us, many of the common causes of migraines are found in a college student's every day routine.
1. Among these migraine causes are changes in hormones, a lack of sleep (which is a problem for most of the people in this classroom), an excess of sleep, changes in the weather, and stress (Pinpointing).
 2. A person's diet can also be a contributing factor to migraines, as certain foods prompt the brain to set off the chemicals that narrow the blood vessels, thus causing a migraine (Pinpointing).

- a. While the list of foods that can cause migraines is extensive, some of those foods that are most near and dear to college students' hearts are present on that list.
- b. Foods that college students may want to steer clear of include chocolate, beer, ice cream, lunch meat, and aspartame, the artificial sweetener found in most diet sodas (Pinpointing).

(Just in case you find it difficult to abstain from your favorite snacks, let's use our brain power and examine possible treatments.)

III. Apart from the numerous prescription drugs that can be taken in an effort to prevent migraines, there are some more traditional approaches to combating these unwelcome headaches.

(Vitamins, Botox, and better communication can help ease the agonizing pain of the migraine.)

- A. There are two natural products that may ease the pain of a migraine sufferer.
 1. The first of these treatments is Riboflavin, a Vitamin B (Pinpointing).
 - a. This vitamin helps create energy in cells throughout the body, which is a process that scientists believe does not happen as efficiently in those who suffer migraines (Pinpointing).
 - b. Riboflavin would help by giving the brain cells the potential to produce energy cells (Pinpointing).
 2. Another possible natural solution to the migraine problem is magnesium.
 - a. During a migraine episode, sufferers have been found to have lower levels of magnesium in their brains, which causes the nerve cells to become "overexcited" (Pinpointing).
 - b. A magnesium supplement can prevent nerve cells from working too hard and causing a migraine (Pinpointing).
- B. Botox is no longer used purely for aesthetic reasons; it can help ease the pain of a migraine, too.
 1. In a 2007 issue of *Neurology Reviews*, Dr. Alan M. Rapoport, the Clinical Professor of Neurology at UCLA wrote that "Botox paralyzes muscles that in some people are terribly intense and can cause a lot of pain."
 2. This works because the Botox "seems to increase the release of certain peptides and transmitters at the end of peripheral nerves," says Rapoport.
- C. Communication is not only important in the classroom, but it can also help prevent migraines.
 1. An article from the May 2007 issue of *Biotech Business Week* reports that when practitioners used the "ask-tell-ask" method of speaking with their patients, they were able to better understand how many migraines their patients were experiencing (New).
 2. These doctors went so far as to say that they uncovered information about their patients' migraines that they never would have learned otherwise (New).

Conclusion:

- I. Migraines are not a typical headache; their symptoms, causes, and treatments make this obvious.
- II. You may not realize it, but migraines affect the people you love, and the people in this classroom; the two college freshmen who gave descriptions of their awful migraines were our very own Gavin and Amy.
- III. Just as our classmates have experienced, the effects of a migraine can stop a successful student in his or her tracks.
- IV. While it may cause you some pain now, taking care of yourself during your college years—and possibly abstaining from some of your favorite foods—may prevent you from one day experiencing the agonizing, throbbing pain of a migraine.