



# Headache Wellness Center

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## Migraine Aura

Migraine aura is experienced by approximately 15-20% of those with migraine. Aura is usually a short-lasting event (5-60 minutes) occurring prior to or during a headache, and may involve an individual's vision, sensation, or motor systems. A headache is usually associated with an aura, although some individuals may experience an aura without the headache at times.

Visual aura is the most common aura type. Individuals may experience flashing lights (scintillations), small blind spots that may enlarge over time (scotoma), or zigzag lines (fortification spectra). Some objects may appear brighter or distorted.

Sensory aura is often described as a tingling sensation. It often begins in the fingertips of one hand and may progress up the arm, frequently involving the face, lips, and tongue. Occasionally the tingling is followed by numbness. These sensations sometimes occur on both sides, and may involve the leg.

Motor aura is the least common aura and is characterized by weakness, usually of an arm or leg. It is seen in certain genetic conditions, including Familial Hemiplegic Migraine.

It is now believed that aura is primarily a consequence of nerve cell changes (a neuronal or electrical event) and not blood vessel changes. Although alterations in blood flow occur (initially increased flow followed by a decreased flow), they are thought to be a secondary event. The nerve cell changes occur along different areas of the brain and are associated with the different auras described above.