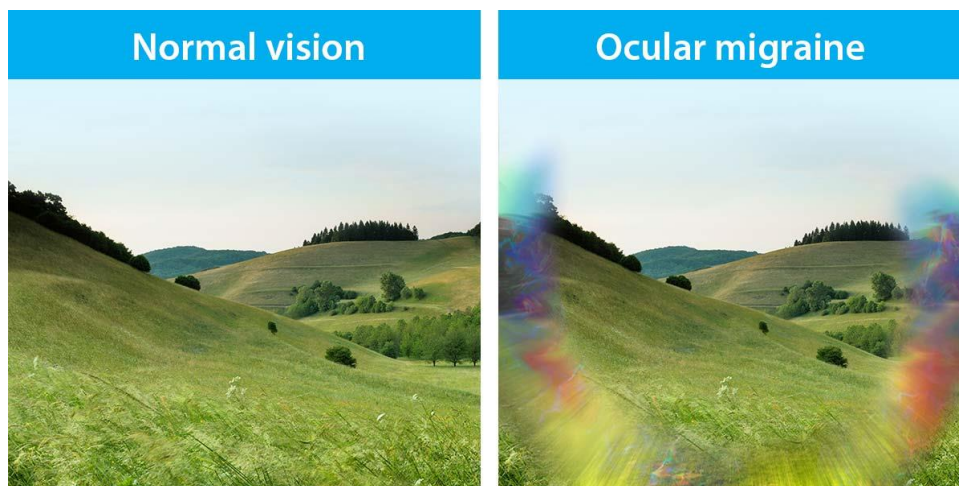


Ocular Migraines

Ocular migraines are transient visual disruptions that typically affect one or both eyes and are devoid of pain. While they can be alarming, they are generally harmless and resolve on their own within 20 to 30 minutes without the need for medication. When accompanied by a pulsating, one-sided headache, this phenomenon is known as a "migraine with aura." Conversely, a migraine lacking a preceding visual disruption is termed a "migraine without aura." Migraine auras predominantly manifest as visual disturbances but can also involve alterations in hearing, speech, or smell, progressive numbness or tingling in the face, arms, or legs, or a generalized weakness.

Ocular Migraine Symptoms

Painless ocular migraines can emerge suddenly, evoking a variety of sensation which has been described as peering through a fractured window, loss of visual field, blur to one side, or a kaleidoscope effect to vision. Others report the perception of a small blind spot in the center of their vision, which gradually expands and is accompanied by vivid, flashing, or flickering lights, as well as zigzagging lines surrounding the blind spot. The blind spot typically enlarges and may shift across the field of vision. The associated visual distortion typically spreads across the visual field and dissipates within approximately 30 minutes.



While the entire migraine episode may conclude within a few minutes, it commonly persists for up to 30 minutes. Approximately 60 percent of migraine sufferers also encounter a "prodrome," which precedes the migraine attack by days or weeks. Prodromal symptoms can be subtle and may encompass alterations in mood, cravings for specific foods, or a general sense of fatigue.

What Causes an Ocular Migraine?

Ocular migraines are believed to share the same underlying causes as headaches. Migraines are thought to have a strong genetic component. They are likely triggered by the activation of mechanisms deep within the brain, leading to the release of inflammatory substances around the nerves and blood vessels of the head and brain. However, the reasons for this activation and the spontaneous resolution of ocular migraines remain unknown. Imaging studies have shown changes in blood flow to the brain during ocular migraines and visual auras, but the precise cause is yet to be determined.

Migraines typically affect adults in their 30s and 40s, although they can onset during puberty and affect children as well. Women are up to three times more likely than men to experience migraines. While specific statistics for ocular migraines are not readily available, it's estimated that approximately 15 to 18 percent of women and 6 percent of men suffer from migraine headaches.

Various triggers can precipitate a migraine attack, including ophthalmic or ocular migraines. These triggers may include certain foods such as aged cheeses, caffeinated beverages, red wine, smoked meats, and chocolate. Additionally, food additives like monosodium glutamate (MSG) and artificial sweeteners can provoke migraines in susceptible individuals. Other potential migraine triggers include cigarette smoke, perfumes, and other strong odours, glaring or flickering lights, lack of sleep and emotional stress.



Ocular Migraine Treatment and Prevention

Ocular migraines typically do not necessitate treatment. If you encounter an ocular migraine while engaged in activities such as driving or tasks requiring clear vision, it's crucial to cease what you're doing and relax until your vision returns to normal. If driving, safely pull over to the side of the road and wait for the visual disturbances to subside entirely.

Diagnosing ocular migraine is more a diagnosis of exclusion than a diagnosis based on specific findings. If you experience visual disturbances exclusion of any pathology such as

retinal detachment, transient ischaemic attack, optic neuritis, papilloedema, intracranial tumour and branch retinal vein occlusion needs to be established. It's prudent to undergo a comprehensive eye examination with one of our optometrists whenever you encounter unusual vision symptoms to exclude these sight-threatening conditions. Contact our team to schedule a consultation without delay. Your vision health is our priority.

Once diagnosed, keeping a journal documenting your diet and activities preceding episodes of ocular migraines or migraines with aura can aid in identifying potential triggers to avoid in the future.

