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Can Nerve Stimulation Help Prevent Migraine?

MINNEAPOLIS – Wearing a nerve stimulator for 20 minutes a day may be a new option for migraine sufferers, according to new research published in the February 6, 2013, online issue of *Neurology*[®], the medical journal of the [American Academy of Neurology](http://www.aan.com).

The stimulator is placed on the forehead, and it delivers electrical stimulation to the supraorbital nerve.

For the study, 67 people who had an average of four migraine attacks per month were followed for one month with no treatment. Then they received either the stimulation 20 minutes a day for three months or sham stimulation, where they wore the device but the stimulation given was at levels too low to have any effect.

Those who received the stimulation had fewer days with migraine in the third month of treatment compared to the first month with no treatment. The number of days with migraine decreased from 6.9 days to 4.8 days per month. The number did not change for those who received the sham treatment.

The study also looked at the number of people who had 50 percent or higher reduction in the number of days with migraine in a month. That number was 38 percent for those who had the stimulation compared to 12 percent of those who received the sham treatment.

There were no side effects from the stimulation.

“These results are exciting, because the results were similar to those of drugs that are used to prevent migraine, but often those drugs have many side effects for people, and frequently the side effects are bad enough that people decide to quit taking the drug,” said study author Jean Schoenen, MD, PhD, of Liège University in Belgium and a member of the American Academy of Neurology.

The study was supported by the Walloon Region, Department of Economy, Employment and Research in Belgium.

To learn more about migraine, visit <http://www.aan.com/patients>.

The American Academy of Neurology, an association of more than 25,000 neurologists and neuroscience professionals, is dedicated to promoting the highest quality patient-centered neurologic care. A neurologist is a doctor with specialized training in diagnosing, treating and managing disorders of the brain and nervous system such as Alzheimer's disease, stroke, migraine, multiple sclerosis, brain injury, Parkinson's disease and epilepsy.

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