

H45 Heart Link to Migraines

To air week of November 5,2007

Intro: Severe pain, vision problems, nausea and sensitivity to light – all symptoms of a migraine headache. Research into why migraines happen is leading doctors to examine not a patient's head but his or her heart. They're looking to prove that many migraines are caused by a very common, often undiagnosed heart defect. More from Mayo Clinic.

Video

Total running time 1:40

Damon Cable

Has migraine headaches

Damon Cable

Has migraine headaches

Audio

DAMON CABLE IS A VERY BUSY
PEDIATRIC NURSE PRACTITIONER.

“AH PAPPAS FRITOS!I TOLD HER
SHE HAD FRENCH FRIES IN HER
EARS.”

HE LOVES THE KIDS, BUT WHEN
DAMON'S MIGRAINES HIT, ON AN
AVERAGE OF TWICE A WEEK,
WORKING WAS NOT EASY.

“WHEN THEY'RE REALLY BAD YOU
CAN'T DO ANYTHING. YOU CAN'T
TOLERATE BRIGHT LIGHTS, YOU
CAN'T TOLERATE NOISES, YOU
CAN'T TOLERATE CHILDREN, YOU
JUST HAVE TO GO TO A DARK
ROOM AND LIE DOWN.”

Standup
Vivien Williams
Reporting

FRUSTRATED, DAMON TURNED TO MAYO CLINIC WHERE DOCTORS TOLD HIM THAT HIS MIGRAINES MIGHT BE CAUSED BY A TINY HOLE IN HIS HEART, CALLED A PATENT FORAMEN OVALE, OR PFO.

Bart Demaerschalk, M.D.
Mayo Clinic Neurologist

“PATIENTS WITH MIGRAINE HEADACHE ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A PFO THAN THE GENERAL POPULATION.”
DR. BART DEMAERSCHALK TEAMED UP WITH COLLEAGUE TIFFANY KOCH TO STUDY WHETHER OR NOT CLOSING PFO’S REDUCE THE FREQUENCY AND SEVERITY OF MIGRAINES. YOU SEE, A PFO IS A HOLE BETWEEN TWO CHAMBERS, OR ATRIA OF YOUR HEART. USUALLY THESE HOLES CLOSE SOON AFTER YOU’RE BORN, BUT FOR ONE FOURTH TO ONE FIFTH OF THE POPULATION THEY STAY OPEN.

THE HOLE ALLOWS BLOOD THAT'S NORMALLY FILTERED IN THE LUNGS TO BYPASS THE LUNGS AND MOVE BETWEEN THE CHAMBERS OF THE HEART. THE THEORY IS THAT UNFILTERED BLOOD MAY CARRY TINY CLOTS OR CHEMICALS TO THE BRAIN AND CAUSE MIGRAINES. IN THE STUDY HALF OF THE PEOPLE UNDERGO A CATHETERIZATION PROCEDURE TO CLOSE THE HOLE. HALF UNDERGO A SHAM PROCEDURE. IF THE FIRST GROUP ENDS UP WITH FEWER HEADACHES, STUDY RESULTS WILL BE POSITIVE. DAMON IS POSITIVE HIS PFO IS CLOSED.

Damon Cable
Has migraine headaches

“HAD THIS PFO CLOSED FIVE WEEKS AGO AND I’VE ONLY HAD TWO HEADACHES SINCE.”
FOR MEDICAL EDGE, I’M VIVIEN WILLIAMS.

Anchor tag:

PFO's are very common and most people who have them don't know it. Damon says he was surprised when he found out.

If this study proves that closing PFO's reduce the frequency and severity of migraine, many people who have two or more migraines a week will have another option for stopping the pain. For more information on this study visit our Website or email questions to koch.tiffany@mayo.edu... [STATIONS: Per the licensing agreement, please provide a link from your station's website to <http://www.mayoclinic.org> or voice tag "mayoclinic.org" for more information.]