

Headaches

Headaches are one of the most frequent health complaints with 76 percent of women and 57 percent of men saying they have a headache at least once a month¹. It comes as no surprise then that headaches cost the U.S. economy an estimated \$17 billion a year in lost work, disability payments, and health care expenses². There have been many suggestive theories as to what causes headaches and migraines with that said the medications being prescribed are largely unsuccessful.

There are several different types of headaches. Identifying the symptoms you are experiencing, what time of day they occur, and how long they last can help define what type of headache you may be experiencing.

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Type of Headache	Symptoms	Risk Factors
Tension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soreness near temples • Tightening of muscles around neck and head • Pressure sensation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary anxiety • Fatigue • Stress • Depression • Poor posture • Jaw clenching • Eye strain • Noise • Light
Cluster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attacks come in groups of 1-4 experienced throughout the day • Lasts 30-45 minutes • Usually one-sided pain described as throbbing or burning • Can be accompanied by watery eyes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoking • Alcohol • Family history
Migraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain usually felt near the temples and in the front or back of the head • Accompanied by nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light, and visual disturbances • Can last up to a week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress • Fatigue • Hormonal changes • Lack of sleep • Caffeine • Alcohol • Missing meals • Additives in food (nitrates, MSG, etc.)
Rebound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple episodes per month • Regular use of headache medications may alter the way certain pain pathways and receptors work in the brain³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overuse of medication (especially if contains caffeine) • Can be caused by prescription pain medications, over-the-counter pain relievers, or combinations of medications
Sinus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localized pain at or around the sinus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflammation of a sinus due to allergies, tumor, or infection

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There are many types of medication people experiment with to resolve their headaches. In fact, a survey put out by *Consumer Reports* found that 31 percent of over the counter medication users admitted that they did not always carefully follow directions on labels, and some readers acknowledged that they don't consider nonprescription medication to be as "serious" as prescribed drugs. Therefore, side effects are not being considered when consumers use over the counter medications especially when combining them with the current medications they are on.

While the traditional medical treatment of headaches has focused on prescription medications which do not address the cause of the symptoms, many alternative modalities are effective in preventing headaches.

Here are some suggestions:

- Avoid skipping meals to prevent low blood sugar from triggering a headache. Try to eat a healthy snack or small meal every 2-3 hours.
- Eating protein and fiber with your meals to help prevent fluctuations in blood sugar. Focus on good quality protein and not the processed protein bars, drinks, and powders. Most desirable proteins: meats (like chicken, fish, turkey and even red meat), eggs, beans, seeds, nuts, sprouts, quinoa, nut butters (ie. peanut butter, cashew butter, almond butter).
- Stay hydrated. Drink 1 quart of clean, filtered water per 50lbs of body weight per day. Do not go over 3 quarts regardless of your weight. We recommend using a multiple filtration system for your drinking and cooking water. There are several types of these, which include reverse osmosis.
- Magnesium: Its deficiency has been associated with serotonin and nitric oxide release, changes in blood vessel size, and inflammation, all of which may play a role causing the pain of migraine⁴.
- Vitamins B6, B12, and folic acid: Supplementing with these may reduce the frequency, severity and disability of migraines, according to research. Daily vitamin supplements were found to produce a two-fold reduction in migraine disability⁵.
- Vitamin D: Researchers presented results of a study at the *50th Annual Meeting of the American Headache Society*, showing that nearly 42 percent of patients with chronic migraine were deficient in vitamin D.
- Acupuncture: studies have shown acupuncture to be very effective in treating cluster headaches and migraines.
- Chiropractic: for more than 100 years Chiropractic Physicians have been correcting structural abnormalities that can cause headaches, effectively eliminating the need for pain medications and surgery.

Still think you're missing something? Then, it's time to get tested. Underlying inflammation, structural misalignments, nutrient deficiencies, toxicities, and environmental exposures can be recognized with a complete metabolic analysis. Developing a lifestyle program and determining supplement recommendations that are best for you can guide you in the right direction of reducing symptoms and frequency of unresolved headaches. Call your nutrition consultant today to schedule an appointment.

References:

- ¹ Nash, Justin PhD. Brain Pain. Lifespan Behavioral and Preventative Medicine. 2011
- ² Dr. Mercola, Joseph. Why migraines strike. <http://articles.mercola.com>. August 12, 2008
- ³ Mayo Clinic Staff. Rebound Headaches. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. December 8, 2009
- ⁴ Sun-Edelstein, Christina MD and Mauskop, Alexander MD. Nutrition and Headaches. National Pain Foundation. 2011
- ⁵ Daniells, Stephen. B Vitamins may offer migraine relief. William Reed Business Media SAS 2011. www.nutraingredients.com/Research/ accessed on 10/31/2011

Federal Law requires that we warn you of the following:

1. Your individual health status and any required health care treatments can only be properly addressed by a professional healthcare provider of your choice. Remember: There is no adequate substitution for a personal consultation with your chosen health care provider. Therefore, we encourage you to make your own health care decisions based upon your research and in partnership with a qualified health care professional.

2. The Constitution guarantees you the right to be your own physician and to prescribe for your own health.