



Health Advice # 24 Headache Help

According to the National Headache Foundation, 45 million people in the United States suffer from frequent, recurring headaches.

Of course there are many different types of headaches including tension, sinus, hunger, and the dreaded migraine attack. Of these 45 million, nearly 30 million are suffering from migraines, and anyone who suffers from migraines can tell you that they tend to be more severe than your run of the mill headache. Migraine headaches can also include nausea, vomiting and extreme sensitivity to light forcing many to shut the world out until they pass. While medications may be necessary for some, especially for migraine sufferers, **there may be some nutritional strategies you can incorporate into your routine to help reduce the number or severity of headaches you experience.**

Diet

Monitoring your headaches and keeping track of when they occur in a diary can help pinpoint triggers. Some triggers, besides stress, to be aware of include hormonal changes around your period, undiagnosed food sensitivities or sensitivities to odors from perfumes, cleaning products, or air fresheners. **Skipping meals or not drinking enough fluids for adequate hydration can also trigger headaches.** Even changes in air pressure from weather events and altitude changes can induce migraines or headaches.

Food sensitivities can be determined by trying an elimination diet. In an elimination diet, common foods that are typically eaten everyday are eliminated from the diet then re-introduced one at a time. Some common foods and additives that trigger migraines or headaches include chocolate, caffeine, red wine, certain cheeses, MSG, and artificial sweeteners.

Supplement Support

Magnesium- Headache sufferers, including both migraine and tension headaches, tend to have lower than normal magnesium levels which may trigger muscle tightness and pain. Some studies have found magnesium may help reduce the duration and need for medication. In one study, those receiving 600 mg/day of magnesium for 12 weeks experienced a 41.6 % reduction in the number of attacks and also reduced the need for medication significantly. (Cephalalgia. 1996 Jun;16(4):257-63)

Food sources of magnesium include legumes, nuts, whole grains and vegetables. If you take a supplement of magnesium, don't exceed more than 500-600 mg per day and avoid supplement ingredients or food sources that you have determined contribute to your headaches. The combination of magnesium, riboflavin, and the herb Feverfew has been found to be especially helpful to migraine sufferers.

Peppermint- Two studies have found topical application of peppermint oil can help ease pain associated with tension headaches. One study found little difference between peppermint oil and acetaminophen (Tylenol) and their ability to ease pain.

Lavender-Essential oil of lavender, which in addition to its calming properties, also has mild analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties. It can be used as aroma therapy to ease migraines and headaches. It is also safe to apply in small amounts directly onto the skin.

To your health! Anima Sana in Corpore Sano (a healthy mind in a healthy body)

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