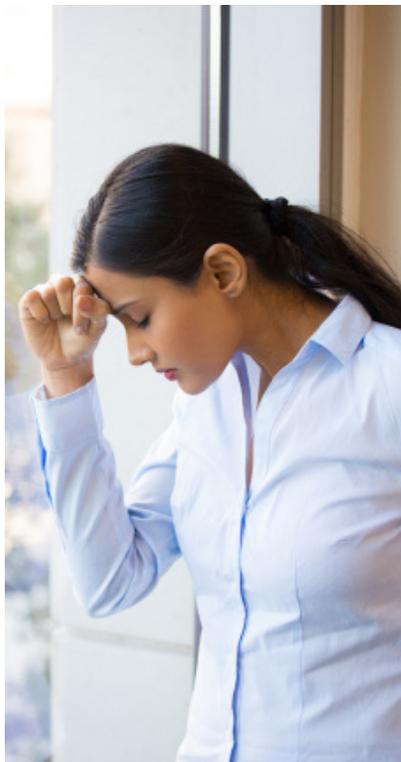


Healthy Lifestyle Tips for People Living with Headaches and Migraines

Information for patients and families

Reading this handout can help you learn how to manage your headaches or migraines with healthy lifestyle choices.



Rest



Healthy Eating



Hydration



Exercise

What's Inside

Introduction.....	3
Tips for better sleep	5
Keeping a healthy body weight.....	8
Drinking enough fluids during the day.....	10
Caffeine.....	11
Exercise and keeping active	12
Ways to reduce stress	14
Headache diary	16

What is a migraine?

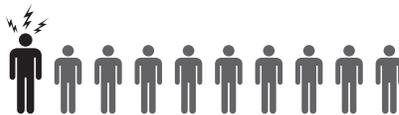
- A migraine is a moderate to severe headache that can last 4 hours to 3 days. It can be 'pulsating' or have a heartbeat quality to it. It is usually felt on one side of the head.
- A migraine can cause nausea (feel like throwing up) and sensitivity to light and sound. Doing everyday activities such as walking up stairs can sometimes make a migraine worse.
- Some people experience **aura** before or during a migraine. Aura may involve seeing spots, feeling tingling, and having trouble finding the right word. Aura symptoms last about 5 minutes and are completely **reversible**.
- People have **chronic migraines** when they have at least 15 headache days a month for 3 months, with most of the headaches being migraine headaches.
- 'Medication overuse headache' means using over-the-counter pain medicine such as Tylenol, Advil or Aspirin, or prescribed medicine such as Sumatriptan or Cambia more than **10 to 15 days** a month. Taking this much pain medicine can cause more headaches to develop.

Fast facts about migraines

3rd



Migraines are the 3rd most common disease.



1 in 10 people suffer from migraines.



Most people don't seek care.

Risk factors

Several risk factors make it more likely that you will have chronic migraines. Some factors can be changed and some cannot.

Things you can change:

- Obesity or overweight
- Taking too much medication
- Having too much caffeine
- Stressful life events
- Sleep disorders (such as sleep apnea)
- Depression and anxiety

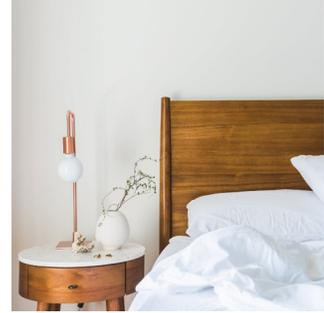
Things you cannot change:

- Frequent headaches
- Sex (women are more likely to have migraines)

Tips for better sleep

Many people who have trouble sleeping or do not get a good night's sleep also have headaches and migraines. Not getting enough sleep can trigger a migraine.

Get good nighttime sleep to help with headache pain and improve your overall health.



Most health care professionals agree that adults need 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night.

Changing your sleep habits can help you improve your sleep!

- Go to bed and get up in the morning at about the same time every day.
- Take time to relax and clear your mind before bedtime.
Take 30 to 45 minutes before bed to try relaxation techniques (exercises that help you relax) such as deep breathing, visualization and progressive muscle relaxation.
- Do not have caffeine past 2:00 pm in the afternoon.
- If you can't fall asleep within 30 minutes, leave your bedroom and go to a quiet dimly lit area. Do something you find boring such as folding laundry or reading boring materials.

- Make sure where you sleep is comfortable and free from distractions. For example:
 - ✓ Make sure your mattress and pillow are comfortable.
 - ✓ Keep your bedroom quiet and dark.
 - ✓ Give pets their own bed.
 - ✓ Avoid watching your clock. Cover your clock or turn it around.
 - ✓ Have a notepad at your bedside to record thoughts and worries.
 - ✓ Avoid activities that keep your mind alert and active before you go to bed such as late night snacking, watching TV and using your iPad or cell phone.

Other resources

Book:

- “No More Sleepless Nights” by Peter Hauri. A workbook is also available.

Free mobile apps:

- Can be used to help keep track of sleep and as a self-guided Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to improve sleep patterns.



- **CBT-i Coach** (Apple, Android)
By US Department of Veterans Affairs



- **Best Sleep Hygiene** (Apple, Android)
By Dr Kent Smith



- **Night Owl – Sleep Coach** (Apple, Android)
By Mindware Consulting, Inc

Eat enough protein to reduce headaches and migraines

People who have headaches and migraines should eat **12 to 15 grams** of protein every day within 30 minutes of waking up.

Eating protein early in the day gives your brain amino acids. Amino acids are the building blocks that cells need to make protein. Giving your body these important amino acids first thing in the morning helps reduce the number of migraines you may have during the day.

Here are some examples of healthy foods with protein:



1 hard-boiled egg has **6 grams** of protein



2 tablespoons of peanut butter have **7 grams** of protein



1 cup of skim milk has **8 grams** of protein



$\frac{3}{4}$ cup of Greek yogurt has **12 grams** of protein



1 smoothie with protein powder has **10 to 15 grams** of protein



$\frac{1}{4}$ cup dry steel cut oats has **7 grams** of protein

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup rolled oats has **7 grams** of protein

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup quick oats has **5 grams** of protein

Keeping a healthy body weight

A healthy body weight will help prevent headaches and migraines.

The latest studies show that being overweight or underweight can increase your chances getting migraines.

- People who are overweight are **3 times** more likely to develop chronic headaches compared to people with a healthy body weight.
- People who are underweight also have a higher chance of getting migraines.

How do I know if I have a healthy body weight?

Body Mass Index (BMI) is one way to find out if you have a healthy weight. BMI is ratio of your weight to your height.

Your health care provider can help you calculate your BMI. Or, search the internet to find many BMI calculators.

You will need to know:

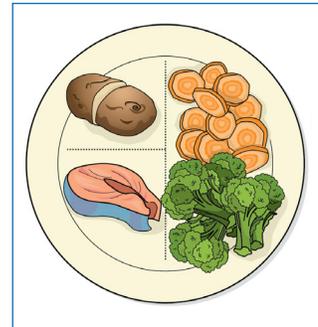
Your weight _____ (pounds) and your height _____ (inches)

According the BMI:

- 20 to 25 is normal
- 25 to 30 is overweight
- higher than 30 is obese
- lower than 18.5 is underweight

Tips on making healthy food choices:

- Avoid eating foods with nitrates (such as preserved meats, hot dogs), old cheeses and red wine. These are common migraine triggers.
- Do not skip meals. Skipping meals will cause you to feel hungrier and to over-eat at your next meal or snack. Have a healthy breakfast each morning.
- Have a variety of foods from the 4 food groups. Look for leafy green vegetables high in riboflavin and healthy meats, soy, peanuts, and strawberries with coenzyme Q10.
- Avoid doing trendy diets such as elimination diets where you don't eat any carbohydrates. These diets don't balance foods from all food groups.
- Avoid foods with artificial sweeteners, colours and preservatives.



Other resources:

Canada's Food Guide

- Use this guide to help plan your meals and choose healthy portion sizes. You can read it [online](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/order-commander/index-eng.php) or print a copy of "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide" from the link below:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/order-commander/index-eng.php>

Free mobile app:



- **Lose It!** (Apple, Android)
By FitNow

Drinking enough fluids during the day

People with migraines are often not drinking enough water or fluids. Drinking water or other non-sugary drinks can prevent headaches and help with the side effects if you already have a headache or migraine.

To prevent migraines and headaches:

- Drink at least 2 litres of non-caffeinated beverages every day. Water is best.
- Always keep a water bottle with you to remind you to drink.
- Set goals for yourself every day. For example, say “By noon I will drink 1 litre of water”.



Other resources

Free mobile apps:



- **My Water Balance: Daily Drink Tracker and Reminder**
(Apple, Android)
By Viktor Sharov



- **iHydrate** (Apple, can link to your Apple Watch)
By Cloforce LLC



- **WaterMinder** (Apple, can link to your Apple Watch)
By Funn Media, LLC

Caffeine

Caffeine is a stimulant that can keep you awake. It can also cause your body to not have as much water as it needs (dehydration).

We don't know how dehydrated you have to be to get migraines, but for some people it seems to trigger chronic daily headaches.



“Weekend migraines” happen when you don't drink caffeine at the usual time. So, if you are going to drink caffeine 2 times a day, then do so 7 days a week to stop a migraine from happening.

If you do drink caffeine, aim to have **less than 300 mg a day from all sources**. Here is a list of the caffeine level in some common foods and drinks:

- Espresso coffee (8 ounces) has 120 mg
- Regular coffee (8 ounces) has 180 mg
- Black teas has 30 to 100 mg
- Chocolate cake has 40 mg
- 1 can of Coke has 40 mg

Remember, don't have caffeinated drinks after 2:00 pm to improve your sleep.

Exercise and keeping active

Regular exercise and keeping active have many health benefits.

Studies show that regular exercise can reduce migraines and make them less frequent and intense. But for some people, intense, strenuous exercise can actually trigger a headache.



How do I exercise safely to prevent headaches?

- If you are just starting to add exercise to your life, begin gradually.
- Start exercising 1 day a week for 20 to 30 minutes. Then work yourself up to 20 to 30 minutes about 3 to 4 times a week.
- You can plan your daily exercise in a way that works best for you. For example, you can exercise 30 minutes at once or you can break it up into two 15-minute sessions.
- Avoid exercising within 3 hours of going to sleep. Exercise can give you energy and stop you from falling asleep.

Understanding your target heart rate

A target heart rate is how fast your heart should be beating a minute to get the most benefit out of the exercise you are doing.

For people with headaches and migraines, exercising too long and hard can trigger headaches or make them worse. To avoid headaches brought on by exercise, try to exercise your daily 20 to 30 minutes of exercise at no higher than **60% of your maximum target heart rate**.

Know what 60% of your maximum heart is by visiting:
<https://www.active.com/fitness/calculators/hearttrate> and use the heart rate calculator.

Other resources

Couch to 5K: A running plan for beginners

Website: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/c25k/Pages/couch-to-5k-plan.aspx>

By: NHS (National Health Services in England)

This website has a 9-week exercise plan that you can follow week to week. Here is an example of weeks 1 to 3:

- Week 1: Begin with a brisk 5-minute walk. Then switch from 60 seconds of running and 90 seconds of walking, for a total of 20 minutes.
- Week 2: Begin with a 5 five-minute walk. Then switch from 90 seconds of running with 2 minutes of walking, for a total of 20 minutes.
- Week 3: Begin with a brisk 5-minute walk. Then run for 90 seconds, walk for 90 seconds, run for 3 minutes and walk for 3 minutes. Do this twice.

Please visit the website for the full weeks 4 to 9 exercise schedule.

Or, download the [podcast](#).

Ways to reduce stress

Studies show the best ways to treat headaches and migraines that don't involve taking pain medicine are programs called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).

Please ask your health care provider for more information about CBT and MBSR.

Other resources

Book:

- "Mind Over Mood" (Greenberger & Padesky)

Mobile apps for Apple and Android:



- **Pacifica**
By Pacifica Labs Inc.



- **Breethe**
By OMG. I Can Meditate! Inc.



- **Headspace**
By Headspace, Inc.



- **What's Up?**
By Jackson Tempra



- **Stop Breathe & Think: Meditate**
By Stop, Breathe & Think



- **Mindshift**
By Anxiety Disorders Association of British Columbia



- **MoodTools**
By MoodTools



- **buddhify: mindful meditation**
By Mindfulness Everywhere



- **CBT Thought Record Diary**
By Eddie Liu



- **Curable Health**
By Curable Inc.

CBT/Mindfulness Programs:

- **The Centre for Mindfulness Studies**
Website: MindfulnessStudies.com
Email: info@mindfulnessstudies.com
- **UHN Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Program**
Email: MBSR-TGH@uhn.ca
- **Heidi Walk**
Address: 390 Dupont Ave. Suite 201
Website: <http://heidwalk.com>
 - ✓ Nine 3-hour weekly evening sessions, plus one 7-hour weekend day retreat (10 sessions in total). Sessions are OHIP-covered. There is a \$200 fee for materials and services not covered by OHIP.
- **Meditation for Health** – Dr. Lucinda Sykes
Address: 720 Spadina Ave.
Website: www.meditationforhealth.com
 - ✓ 10-week program (with the option of completing Part One and Part Two). Fees apply. Please check the website for the cost of this program.

Keep track with a headache diary

To help us understand your headache pattern and the usual symptoms you have, keep a headache diary . A headache diary is where you write down how many headaches you have a day, when they happen and how you feel.



How can a headache diary help?

Writing down or tracking your headaches will help you figure out if you have any triggers and if our treatment is helping to reduce your symptoms.

Important: This is not a full list of vendors, agencies and resources. University Health Network does not recommend one company or person over another and is not responsible for the care and services provided. Please contact any vendors directly to make sure the information is correct or to find out more about their products. University Health Network tries to keep patient education brochures up to date, but some information may change.