

Headaches: Hunting Down the Cause of Your Pain



The Pastore Philosophy

"It is my view that one diet does not fit all. We are all biochemically unique, thus nutritional protocols must be tailored for the individual. As a clinical nutritionist that sees thousands of patients a year, I design nutritional protocols specific for each patient, and work with them closely to assist in implementing the nutritional plan." -- Dr. Robert Pastore

Robert L. Pastore, Ph.D.

Is your pain in the head becoming a real pain in the neck? There are many factors including stress, certain foods, food additives, and hormones that can cause headaches.

The Three Major Headache Categories

Researchers have classified many different types of headaches; there are sinus headaches, exertion headaches, fever headaches, menstrual headaches, and bilious headaches. Let's examine the three major categories of headaches.

- **Tension or muscle contraction headaches** are often caused by anxiety and stress. These headaches are characterized by dull pain that begins in the neck or back of the head and squeezes the forehead area. They are characteristically described as having a "rubber band" tightened around your head.
- **Migraine or vascular headaches** affect approximately 28 million people, and 4 times more women than men. Migraines can begin suddenly, or present with warning signs, such as aura. They are characterized with one-sided sharp throbbing pain that may induce vomiting, dizziness and hypersensitivity to sounds and light.
- **Cluster headaches**, which are also vascular, affect approximately 1 million people per year in the United States. Cluster headaches usually cause pain on one side of the head, occur in groups or "clusters", which can last for days at a time.

Headache Triggers

Anxiety and stress are the most common triggers of headaches. Avoiding all controllable situations that commonly cause stress and tension, such as avoiding over-scheduling appointments, and dodging upsetting confrontations and situations, may help you avoid some of your headaches. To address the stressors that you can't directly control, you can take steps to help you handle the stress and help you avoid tension headaches. Stress reduction exercises such as biofeedback, meditation, and yoga, can help you to become a stress survivor. And, let's not forget about moving the muscles below your head. Physical exercise is a great stress reducer.

Dietary allergies play a major role in the onset of headaches. Identification of allergens in your diet can result in elimination of that cantankerous throbbing in your head. In clinical practice, I eliminate specific known headache triggers

commonly found in one's diet prior to receiving the results of allergy testing. Let's explore some of the common dietary headache inducers.

A group of phosphoproteins in milk are commonly referred to as "**casein**". Casein, which comprises 78.7% of all the protein in milk, is a major trigger of migraines and other types of headaches. Many practitioners eliminate all sources of casein in the headache sufferer's diet. To eliminate all casein one must avoid all dairy, and the many foods in which it is found. It is commonly listed as sodium caseinate, calcium caseinate, or milk protein on many food labels. These three main ingredients are found in sports bars, sports drinks, packaged goods and some commercial canned tuna fish. An excellent book on the effects of casein and headache is "How To Rid Your Body of Pain", by Dr. Daniel Twogood.

Withdrawal reactions may occur with food allergy elimination. Many people with dairy allergies that stop eating dairy, actually end up having a headache sometime during the first week of food elimination. The key is to ride it out, follow your doctor's orders about how to address the headache, and stay away from the food you are allergic to. Another common dietary headache trigger is **tyramine**. Tyramine is a phenolic amine found in various foods and beverages. The following list depicts tyramine sources that should be avoided.

- **Cheeses:** All aged and mature cheeses, since it is impossible to know the exact tyramine content, all cheeses should be avoided. Including but not limited to cheddar, Swiss, blue cheese, mozzarella, Parmesan, Romano, cheese spreads, cheese casseroles or any foods made with cheese.
 - **Yeast, Brewers and Extracts:** This group includes brewers yeast, extracts such as marmite, and fresh homemade yeast leavened breads; yeast found in prepared foods, soups, can foods, frozen foods, should be checked for the addition of yeast abstracts and should be avoided.
 - **Meats/Fish Group:** Pork, and all smoked, aged, pickled, fermented, or marinated meats must be avoided. Including but not limited to pickled fish, pickled herring, meat extracts, livers, dry sausages or prepared meats, such as salami, bologna, pepperoni, frankfurters, bacon, bologna, liverwurst and ham.
 - **Beverages:** No coffee, tea, cocoa, beer, Ales, domestic and imported, Wines, especially Chianti vermouth, Whiskey and liqueurs, such as Drambuie and Chartreuse. Nonalcoholic varieties of beers and wines should also be avoided.
 - **Supplements:** yeast based vitamin supplements, L-tyrosine, and NADH.
- Also avoid: chocolate, overripe bananas, citrus fruits (oranges and grapefruit), sauerkraut, broad fava beans, Italian beans, tofu, soy sauce, and miso soup.

MSG, the ubiquitous flavor enhancer, must be avoided. Monosodium Glutamate is directly associated with the onset of headaches in many people. According to George Schwartz, M.D., MSG is found in many common grocery items, but is usually hidden in the ingredient label. The following listing should help you avoid MSG and eliminate the common misconception that this substance is only found in Chinese food.

- **Definite Sources of MSG:** hydrolyzed protein, sodium caseinate or calcium caseinate, autolyzed yeast or yeast extract, gelatin
- **Possible sources of MSG:** textured protein; carrageenan; vegetable gum seasonings; spices; flavorings, natural flavorings, flavorings of chicken, beef or pork, smoke flavorings; bouillon, broth or stock; barley malt, malt extract, malt flavoring; whey protein, whey protein isolate; soy protein isolate or concentrate, soy sauce or extract

For more information on MSG, click this link <http://www.nomsg.com/>, or refer to the book "In Bad Taste: The MSG Symptom Complex", by George R. Schwartz, M.D.

Caffeine can cause headaches. If you are a coffee drinker that decided to quit and had that classic "caffeine withdrawal headache", you know the pain inducing power of this substance. Even the caffeine content in standard OTC pain relievers can cause a rebound headache. When trying to kick the coffee habit, wait until the weekend, or when time off from work is available. Then, try a coffee substitute product, such as the latest from the company Allergy Research called Best Café.

Avoiding **tannins** may be helpful for some sufferers of headaches. Tannins are found in black tea, many herb teas (but not tea component extracts), apple juice (though not apples), dates, kiwi, peach, berries, coffee, chocolate, carob, alfalfa, red wine, many alcoholic drinks, walnuts, and pecans.

Other substances to avoid include hydrogenated oils, sugar, food additives (especially sulfites), artificial sweeteners, alcohol, and smoking.

Environmental allergies can play a role in the onset of headaches. Working with a progressive medical center to identify such allergies can result in treatment called neutralization and desensitization, which can help alleviate headaches if these allergies are part of the cause.

Hormones may be the cause of your headaches. Sixty percent of women's migraines are linked to their menstrual cycle. Migraine-type pain shortly before, during, or after menstruation, or at mid-cycle, may indicate a variation in estrogen levels. Further, hormone neutralization/desensitization may be beneficial therapy when treating headaches. A knowledgeable holistic

physician can identify such problems. Asking your doctor about DIM (diindolemethane), an extract of cruciferous vegetables (such as broccoli and cauliflower) called I3C (indole-3-carbinol) that is converted by exposure to stomach acid to its active form (DIM), might help in cases of estrogen dominance syndrome.

Controlling blood sugar is an often overlooked, yet important part of any headache treatment protocol. Never consuming carbohydrates alone, eating small frequent protein rich meals, and avoiding all refined sugars and flours in one's diet are just some of the steps to stabilizing blood sugar to head off a headache.

Magnesium deficiency has been associated with headaches. A medical doctor will measure ionized magnesium, the amount of magnesium within the cell (not serum magnesium, which is only low in extreme deficiency states).

Reducing the Number of Headaches

Intranasal B12 has been shown to reduce the incidence of migraine headaches. Intranasal administration of 1 mg of vitamin B12 for 3 months reduced the frequency of migraine attacks by 50% in people with recurrent migraines.

Coenzyme Q10 has been shown in clinical research to reduce the incidence of headaches. Because some migraines have been associated with a deficiency in a cells' ability to generate energy, researchers thought it made sense to test a compound important to the functioning of cells' batteries called the mitochondria. Swiss researchers reported at the American Academy of Neurology's annual meeting that 300 milligrams of coenzyme Q10 daily, halved the incidence of migraines, compared with dummy pills.

A study conducted at Albert Einstein College of Medicine indicates that an extract of the root of a plant called **butterbur** (*Petasites hybridus*) significantly reduces the frequency of migraine headaches. The study, published in the *Journal Neurology*, concluded that 75 milligrams of butterbur twice daily reduced the incidence of migraine headaches by 45% by the end of the 16 week study. Many people don't like the idea of taking a prescription medication every day as a preventive, and for them, butterbur is an excellent alternative that now has a firm base of scientific support.

The herb **feverfew** has been traditionally used to prevent headaches. In a study of 76 migraine sufferers, those who ingested feverfew capsules (70 to 114 mg) daily for 4 months experienced a 24% reduction in attacks and a substantial drop in symptoms that often accompany migraines, such as nausea and vomiting, compared to those who received placebo. Feverfew may enhance the blood thinning characteristics of aspirin or blood thinning medication. Consult

your physician prior to taking this or any other supplement.

As you can see, certain supplements can help ease that pain in your head. Doses of the following supplements should be tailored to each individual by a certified nutritionist under the guidance of a medical doctor. This information is for educational purposes only. Consult a medical doctor knowledgeable in the field of clinical nutrition prior to taking any nutritional supplement.

Supplements

- Calcium 1,000 mg in divided doses
- Magnesium 400-800 mg
- B2 100 - 400 mg
- B complex 100 mg
- CoQ10 400 – 1200 mg
- Feverfew 2-3 capsules per day of a standardized extract
- Butterbur – 75 mg, twice daily.
- Curcumin 1,000 mg daily
- Intranasal B12 at onset

Additional Research

Other causes of headaches that need to be examined include TMJ (temporomandibular joint) syndrome, brain tumor, spinal misalignment, over doses of vitamin A, over doses of fish oil and hypertension. It is imperative to see a doctor if you are suffering from headaches.

A very interesting preliminary trial revealed that *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*, an organism that causes peptic ulcers) infection may predispose people to migraine headaches. In the trial, 40% of migraine sufferers had an *H. Pylori* infection, and eradication of *H. Pylori* resulted in a major reduction in the incidence of migraines. Further clinical studies are needed.

According to the National Headache Foundation, your genes may play a role in you becoming a migraine victim. If both your parents had migraines, you have a 75% chance of inheriting that pain. If only one parent is a migraine sufferer, your risk drops to 50%. If a distant relative has migraines, your risk sinks to 20%.

Migraines may damage part of the brain that responds to pain and activates the fight or flight response. According to a recent study, scientists imaging the brain have found that blood flow to certain parts of the brain increases dramatically during the course of a migraine. Researchers at the Kansas University Medical Center found that migraine and chronic headache sufferers had more iron in a part of the brain called the periaqueductal gray region than those without headaches. The researchers mapped the brains of 51 subjects

divided into three groups: 17 without migraines, 17 with migraines, and 17 with episodic migraines that progressed into a condition called chronic daily headache. They used magnetic resonance imaging in combination with a technique that maps changes in the concentration of iron. According to researchers, the concentration of iron corresponds to the amount of damage – more iron indicates the potential for free radical damage. The results of the study were presented at the International Headache Conference in Manhattan.

The periaqueductal gray region sits in the brain stem, which extends up from the spinal cord and controls many involuntary processes. One of its main functions is to diminish pain. Researchers postulate that chronic migraines can lead to increased sensitivity to pain, even when they don't have a headache. K. Michael Welch, the vice chancellor of research at Kansas University Medical Center, believes that though future studies are needed, we should be very aggressive about preventing migraines.