BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF AUDIOVESTIBULAR PHYSICIANS

MIGRAINOUS VERTIGO, VESTIBULAR MIGRAINE AND MIGRAINE

Information sheet on triggers, diet and lifestyle modifications

Migraine is a well-known cause of headaches. It is also a common cause of vertigo and dizziness. Vertigo due to migraine can occur without headaches. Migraine headache is often treated with over-the-counter and prescription-only medications.

Identifying, avoiding and/or controlling the common triggers can be used along with medications to control or reduce the frequency of the condition.

The triggers are not the same for everyone, but keeping a migraine diary (www.migraine.org.uk/information/factsheets/migraine-diary) may help sufferers to identify the factors that specifically trigger an attack. This could be several hours beforehand. If vertigo is the predominant symptom, substitute ‘headache’ with ‘vertigo’ in the diary.

This information sheet provides a summary of migraine triggers and lifestyle modifications but does not offer any advice on drug treatment.

The list is not necessarily complete: you may discover triggers specific to your individual situation that are not on the list below.
### FOOD and DRINKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Advice</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chocolate:</strong>&lt;br&gt;All forms including flavourings and drinking chocolate</td>
<td>• Avoid</td>
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<td><strong>Dairy products:</strong>&lt;br&gt;ripened, strong cheeses (cheddar, stilton, blue, brie)</td>
<td>• Cottage and cream cheeses are allowed</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Alcohol:</strong>&lt;br&gt;(especially oaked/aged), red wine, port, whisky, brandy</td>
<td>• Limit alcohol to beer or unoaked white wine or, preferably, avoid altogether</td>
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<td><strong>Meat/fish:</strong>&lt;br&gt;canned, aged or processed meat or fish: ham and bacon, game, fermented sausage, salami, pepperoni, Frankfurter and hot dog sausages, smoked meat, pickled herring and dried fish. Also, occasionally chicken liver and shellfish</td>
<td>• Use fresh or frozen meat and fish without preservatives or additives</td>
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<td><strong>Yeast extract:</strong>&lt;br&gt;Marmite, stock cubes, gravy mixes etc</td>
<td>• Make gravy from pan juices</td>
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<td><strong>Caffeine:</strong>&lt;br&gt;coffee and tea, cola</td>
<td>• Avoid cola. Take decaffeinated tea/coffee</td>
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<td><strong>Fruits:</strong>&lt;br&gt;red plums, avocado, passion fruit, citrus (orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit) fruits, strawberries, ripe bananas</td>
<td>• Avoid diet drinks and sweeteners as may contain aspartame</td>
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<td><strong>Vegetables:</strong>&lt;br&gt;beans, peas, tomatoes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Others:</strong>&lt;br&gt;foods containing MSG (monosodium glutamate), canned soups, non-white vinegars, fermented, pickled or marinated products and aspartame (artificial sweeteners)</td>
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<td>STRESSES</td>
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| **Emotional stress:**  
strong emotions (anger, worry, tension), depression and anxiety |  
- Relaxation and stress management  
- Anticipate and manage lifestyle changes properly  
- Take moderate routine exercise (eg 3 to 5 times a week  
- Eat regular meals and drink enough water |
| **Physical stress:**  
exertion, tiredness, poor sleep pattern including jet lag, dehydration, disruption of lifestyle, travelling |  |
| **Irregular eating:**  
 skipping meals or bingeing |  |

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| **Hormonal changes:**  
puberty, menstrual cycle (especially the pre-menstrual period), oral contraceptive pill, pregnancy (migraines may cease during pregnancy and may return after), menopause and HRT |  
- Advice from GP may be required to avoid oestrogen-only oral contraceptive pills |

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- Bright lights eg supermarket, car headlamps  
- Flickering or flashing lights (from televisions and computers), fluorescent lights  
- Loud sounds  
- Strong odours eg: perfume, petrol, paint, cigarette smoke, some food  
- Weather changes: rapid changes in atmospheric pressure, rising temperature and humidity  
- Stuffy environments  
- Smoking |  
- Wear dark glasses to reduce glare from bright light  
- Dim the background light on the computer or use a tinted screen  
- Avoid exposure to strong smells  
- Stop smoking |
Adapted from:

- http://www.migraine.org.uk/information/triggers
- Tusa R: Migraine, Meniere’s disease and Motion Sensitivity. In Vestibular Rehabilitation, 3rd edition pp195-6 Editor, Herdman SJ.

The following links provide further patient-focussed information:


Compiled by Dr Victor Osei-Lah on behalf of BAAP/2017

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