



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

Examples	Advice
<p>Chocolate: All forms including flavourings and drinking chocolate</p> <p>Dairy products: ripened, strong cheeses (cheddar, stilton, blue, brie)</p> <p>Alcohol: (especially oaked/aged), red wine, port, whisky, brandy</p> <p>Meat/fish: 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</p> <p>Yeast extract: Marmite, stock cubes, gravy mixes etc</p> <p>Caffeine: coffee and tea, cola</p> <p>Fruits: red plums, avocado, passion fruit, citrus (orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit) fruits, strawberries, ripe bananas</p> <p>Vegetables: beans, peas, tomatoes</p> <p>Others: foods containing MSG (monosodium glutamate), canned soups, non-white vinegars, fermented, pickled or marinated products and aspartame (artificial sweeteners)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid • Cottage and cream cheeses are allowed • Limit alcohol to beer or unoaked white wine or, preferably, avoid altogether • Use fresh or frozen meat and fish without preservatives or additives • Make gravy from pan juices • Avoid cola. Take decaffeinated tea/coffee • Avoid diet drinks and sweeteners as may contain aspartame

STRESSES

Examples	Advice
<p>Emotional stress: strong emotions (anger, worry, tension), depression and anxiety</p> <p>Physical stress: exertion, tiredness, poor sleep pattern including jet lag, dehydration, disruption of lifestyle, travelling</p> <p>Irregular eating: skipping meals or bingeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

HORMONES

<p>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</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice from GP may be required to avoid oestrogen-only oral contraceptive pills
---	---

ENVIRONMENT

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>
- Diamond S: Dietary factors in vascular headache. Neurology Forum 1991; 2:2
- 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:

1. **<http://www.migraine.org.uk>**
2. <https://www.migrainetrust.org/living-with-migraine>
3. <https://www.migrainetrust.org/living-with-migraine/coping-managing/exercise>
4. <https://www.migrainetrust.org/living-with-migraine/coping-managing/sleep>

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

Acknowledgements:

*Dr Veronica Kennedy, Dr Chung Chan,
Dr Louisa Murdin, Dr Peter West and Dr Dolores Umapathy*

This publication is for information purposes only. The author, BAAP and its officers are not liable for any harm to any person acting on or refraining from any action as a result of this information. Medical advice should be sought on specific matters.