



What Triggers Headaches? What You Can Do

Here are some of the most common things that start headaches and some simple things you can do to prevent headaches caused by these triggers:

Trigger	What You Can Do
<p>Food & food additives In general, foods that trigger migraines are aged, pickled, preserved, or fermented. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ food additives such as nitrates (in hot dogs, salami, processed lunch meats, ham, bacon or sausage) ▪ MSG (in packaged foods, soups, stews, meat tenderizers and Chinese food) ▪ aged cheeses (including Cheddar, Brie, Gruyere, Stilton and Camembert) ▪ yeast (in pizza crusts, raised coffee cakes and donuts, home baked and sourdough breads) ▪ alcohol ▪ nuts and bananas 	<p>When you get a headache, think about the foods you have eaten recently. Are any of them on the list? If so, you may want to cut back to see if it helps your headaches.</p>
<p>Feelings and moods There is a strong link between headaches and feelings that trouble you. Difficult feelings can bring on headaches, keep them going, and make them worse. Emotions don't cause your headaches but they can make it more likely you'll get them.</p>	<p>If you think your headaches are related to your emotions, talk with your personal physician or mental health specialist. They can help you find out if treatment for depression or anxiety could help you feel better and lessen your headaches</p>
<p>Dieting/hunger Any change in eating habits such as dieting, missing meals or changing the times you eat may trigger migraines. Not getting enough water can also trigger migraines.</p>	<p>If you are prone to headaches, try not to skip meals. Drink fluids regularly, especially if exercising or on hot days.</p>
<p>Caffeine Migraines are often triggered by suddenly decreasing or stopping caffeine (withdrawal) or getting too much caffeine.</p>	<p>Try to limit your coffee, tea, or soda intake to no more than one cup per day. This will usually help your headaches. If you are drinking a lot of caffeine, cutting back gradually can keep you from getting withdrawal headaches</p>
<p>Alcohol Alcoholic drinks like beer, wine, champagne, and liqueurs can cause headaches. Alcohol can do this in several different ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ through expanding blood vessels ▪ through the tyramine (a byproduct of an amino acid) that some drinks contain ▪ through dehydration, which produces the infamous hangover headache 	<p>If you choose to drink alcohol, limit your intake to 1 drink per day or less for women and 2 drinks or less per day for men. Be sure to drink plenty of water so you don't get dehydrated.</p>

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<p>Light Strong or glaring light can trigger headaches. So can flickering lights from TV or computer screens, strobe or laser lights, or reflections from water or metal such as cars.</p>	<p>Wearing a hat and using sunglasses can help avoid headaches caused by light. Using an incandescent desk lamp may help with headaches triggered by fluorescent light.</p>
<p>Motion/travel Travel of any kind, but long car rides in particular, can be a trigger for migraines.</p>	<p>Since motion headaches are related to motion sickness, try a medicine for that.</p>
<p>Smells/odors Intense, specific food odors, cigarette or other smoke, perfumes, or cleaning products can also trigger migraines. Pay attention to any strong odors that seem to cause your headaches.</p>	<p>Once you know which ones are troublesome for you, you can try to stay away from them. If you must be around the odors, do your best to lessen the effects: if you are indoors, go outside away from the odors or open windows and doors so you can get some fresh air and the odors can move out.</p>
<p>Stress Migraine attacks or tension headaches often occur during or after stress, especially on weekends and holidays.</p>	<p>You may not always be able to control stressful events, but you can control your response to those events. Look under the Self-Care and Prevention Section for some ideas for controlling your stress.</p>
<p>Weather Changes High humidity, atmospheric pressure changes (especially changes in altitude); rapid shifts in temperature or extreme heat or cold may bring on migraine attacks. Many people mistake these for "sinus headaches."</p>	<p>There is not too much you can do about temperature extremes except to avoid them.</p>
<p>Sleep Patterns Changes in your sleep routine can trigger migraines and tension headaches. Not getting enough sleep can cause problems. So can too much sleep.</p>	<p>Ideally, if you have migraines, you should try to keep a regular sleep schedule and get at least 8 hours of sleep every night</p>
<p>Loud noises/sounds Sudden or prolonged loud noises can trigger headaches</p>	<p>If you are sensitive to sound, you may want to avoid spending a lot of time in noisy places like crowded malls, places where there is loud music playing or construction zones.</p>