
Nutrition for Migraine

What is a migraine?

A migraine is a headache that causes severe pain and other symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, dizziness, mood changes. Migraine headaches may also cause increased sensitivity to light, sound, and smells. Migraines can last anywhere from a few hours to several days.

What causes a migraine?

Migraine triggers are different from person to person. Over time you may learn that you get migraines after certain foods and experiences. It may be helpful to keep a daily journal or calendar of your migraines to learn what triggers them. Some common triggers include:

- **Alcoholic beverages** such as red wine, beer, whiskey, champagne, etc.
- **Caffeinated drinks and foods** like coffee, tea, soda, and chocolate.
- **Food additives** including nitrates and nitrites, monosodium glutamate (MSG), yeast extracts, hydrolyzed vegetable or plant proteins, and artificial sweeteners.
- **Foods containing tyramine** such as fermented fruits and vegetables (sauerkraut, kimchi), aged cheese (Cheddar, gouda, muenster, feta), wine, beer, and processed/fermented meats (Chorizo, corned beef, imported pepperoni). Spoiled or close to expiring foods also may be high in tyramine.
- **Some vegetable and fruits** including some beans (broad, Italian, lima, lentil, fava, soy), sauerkraut, peas, avocados, and overripe banana.
- **Very cold or iced foods.**
- **Skipped meals:** Long periods between meals can cause severe symptoms due to low blood glucose levels.
- **Not enough sleep:** Make sure to get seven hours or more of sleep a night.
- **Eye strain.**
- **Emotional stress and anxiety.**
- **Smoking or second-hand smoke.**
- **Bright or flashing light.**
- **Certain medications:** Talk to your doctor if you think this might be a trigger.

Diet changes to reduce migraines:

- **Regular meal and sleep pattern.** Consider eating small, frequent meals daily. Focus on eating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- **Avoid trigger foods.** Those stated in the section above and all other triggers you discover by logging food intakes.
- **Cook meals from scratch.** Meals prepared from home help in avoiding processed foods that may trigger symptoms.
- **Stay hydrated.** Drink water throughout the day instead of soda or coffee. Talk to your team dietitian for specific hydrating fluid goals.
- **Stay active.** Regular exercise of at least 150 minutes of moderate activity per week can lower risk of migraines.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight or obese is linked to many symptoms of migraines. Make an appointment with your team dietitian to create a plan for weight management.
- **Increase healthy fats.** Monounsaturated and omega-3 fatty acids are helpful in reducing inflammation in the body. Examples of these foods include cold water fatty fish, avocado, nuts/seeds, canola oil, olive oil, and walnut oil.
- **Talk to your dietitian to review lifestyle changes.** Ask about starting an elimination diet to better identify potential triggers.