

Healing Headaches-Roby Mitchell M.D.(Dr.Fitt)

Around 10% of Americans suffer from migraines. Women are over three times more susceptible than men, implicating hormones as a factor. While not life threatening, these severe headaches can be debilitating enough to make a person consider suicide.

What Causes Migraines?

Recent studies with high-tech brain imaging machines allow researchers to peak inside the brain and view migraines in progress. They have learned that migraines happen in people with abnormally excitable neurons, or brain cells. When these people encounter a trigger, those neurons fire off electrical impulses at the back of the brain. This sets off a chain reaction, spreading eventually to pain centers in the brainstem. Pain results from brainstem activation and/or blood vessel inflammation resulting from rapidly changing blood flow. Changes in blood flow and blood vessel size are caused by release of various brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) and chemicals that cause **inflammation** (leukotrienes/prostaglandins). Whether a person gets migraines depends on their genetic susceptibility and the strength of the triggers.

Steps to Prevention

1. **Pacify Your neurons**-Neurons are like cranky babies and they will fuss if they don't get what they want. The 3 critical nutrients that cranky neurons need are: magnesium, essential fats, and antioxidants. **Magnesium** is the body's natural relaxation mineral. It prevents muscles in blood vessel walls from spasming and also controls neurotransmitter release. People who get migraines tend to have low magnesium levels. **Take 1 -3 tsp of Calm each day or apply 1/2 tsp of magnesium oil. Essential fats** (EFA's), found in flaxseed, chia

seed and fish oil, control the production and release of inflammatory chemicals called leukotrienes and prostaglandins. Medications like aspirin, ibuprofen, and Celebrex are designed to slow production of these chemicals. Daily intake of EFA's will reduce your susceptibility to inflammation, reducing not only your risk of migraines but also heart disease, Alzheimer's, diabetes, high blood pressure and more.

Take ¼ cup Dakota Gold flaxseed or chia seed each day.

Alternatively you may add fish oil capsules or liquid-enough to get 2-3000mg of DHA/day. Adding more fish to your diet is also helpful in many ways. Be sure to get "wild caught" or eat only small fish like sardines that don't accumulate much mercury. **Alpha lipoic acid** is a powerful and inexpensive antioxidant. **Take 600mg/day.**

2. Menstrual Migraines-Use a menstrual calendar (available@ your compounding pharmacy) to chart when your migraines occur. If they regularly occur around the middle of your cycle, they are hormone related. In this case you'll want to add progesterone to the above regimen. **Her Balance cream- 1 pump at bedtime** will usually prevent migraines. Putting this cream on your fingertips combined with magnesium oil and massaging it into your temples will get rid of a migraine already in progress.

3. Food triggers-Researchers have been able to eliminate 85 % Of migraine headaches by having patients eliminate the following foods: **caffeine**, including chocolate (wean off to avoid withdrawal headaches); **cheeses** except American, cream and cottage; **MSG** which may be listed as hydrolyzed vegetable/soy /plant protein, natural flavoring, yeast extract, broth, or stock; **yogurt; sour cream; nuts; peanut butter; processed meats; alcohol; vinegar; citrus fruits; yeast containing breads; aspartame (NutraSweet); broad/lima/fava and navy beans; corn; soy; sauerkraut; and wheat.** Completely stop all these foods for two weeks. You may then add them back one at a time in four day intervals to see which ones cause problems.

4. Natural Therapies- Petadolex contains extracts from the butterbar plant shown to be as effective as prescription migraine medications. **Feverfew** has been approved in Canada as a treatment for migraines. **Ginger** works similar to aspirin etc., without the side effects. These therapies are better at prevention than they are at getting rid of a migraine in progress. Discuss dosages with a knowledgeable health care professional.

5. Your Medication May be Contributing to Your problem- These medications cause a “rebound” effect that requires you to use larger doses or stronger medications the more they are used: Caffeine (Excedrine etc.) Fiorinal, Midrin, Migranal, Imitrex, Zomig, and Amerge. Getting off these medications can be tough, as you may have to endure a migraine episode in order to get off of them.

6. Immediate relief- Talk with your compounding pharmacist about my special compound for quick migraine relief: Progesterone 20mg/lidocaine/magnesium 500mg prepared as a lozenge.

7. Food triggers in children- Milk, eggs, chocolate, oranges, wheat, cheese, tomatoes, pork, beef, corn, soy, tea, oats, coffee, peanuts, bacon, potatoes, apples, peaches, grapes, chicken, bananas, strawberries, melons and carrots can trigger migraines in children. Headaches can occur as much as one week after eating a food trigger. Again, stop everything at once for two weeks then re-introduce them one at a time with a 4 day interval between foods.

8. Environmental Triggers- In some people, migraines are initiated by exposure to certain sounds, sights or smells. Following the advice above for reducing neuron excitability as well as avoiding these triggers will reduce the frequency and intensity of migraines.

9. Check your thyroid status- If thyroid levels are low, it creates an

environment of estrogen dominance and yeast overgrowth in your system. Yeast will also suck up important cell nutrients, like glucose. Any symptoms that are caused by too much estrogen (heavy menstrual bleeding, fibroids, PMS, breast tenderness/fibrocyst, migraines) can develop in this situation. It's not for certain if this is because of reduced metabolism of estrogen or increased production of estrogen from fat cells that accumulate with hypothyroidism. Unfortunately, conventional thyroid hormone blood tests do a very poor job of detecting hypothyroidism. You can evaluate yourself for hypothyroidism by going to my website <www.drfit.com> and clicking on "health evaluations". If you circle more than 5 of the symptoms, and your oral temperature is consistently below 98.6, you may be hypothyroid. Two specialized blood tests may help confirm your diagnosis. One is a thyroid antibody test. The other is a TRH stimulation test. These tests have a higher yield of making the diagnosis, but they are tests most physicians are not familiar with. Even if these tests are also normal you may still be hypothyroid and it would not be unreasonable to ask your Dr. to try you on thyroid replacement for a month. The improvements can be quite dramatic in several areas.