



# Diet and Headaches: What's the Connection?

Are you one of the 45 million people in the United States who suffers from headaches? If so, relief could be found by taking a close look at your diet.

Headaches, and more severe migraines, can be triggered by any one of the following:

- Skipping meals
- Dehydration
- Changes in weather
- Some physical activities
- Emotions and Stress
- Medication
- Hormonal changes

It is important to see your doctor for proper diagnosis and treatment of chronic or severe headaches.

But certain foods may also trigger headaches and migraines. The list of potentially offending foods is long. Chances are, if you are susceptible to food-triggered headaches, they will be set off by only one or a few foods. Keep track of what you eat and your headaches for a few weeks. If you identify foods that may be triggers, eliminate them one at a time to see if you get some relief.

Headache relief may come from drinking adequate water and caffeine-free beverages, eating regular meals and snacks and eliminating any trigger foods from your diet.

Foods implicated in headaches and migraines include:

- Aged cheeses: cheddar, blue cheese, Brie and Camembert
- Alcohol: especially red wine and champagne
- Artificial sweeteners: aspartame
- Bread: sourdough bread, fresh yeast and homemade bread
- Caffeine (excessive amounts – usually > 2 cups/day): caffeinated tea, coffee, cola, diet cola
- Chocolate, nuts, peanut butter, pizza
- Fermented, pickled (pickles, olives, sauerkraut) or marinated foods
- Fruits: citrus fruits, dried fruit, papayas, avocados, red plums, bananas
- Ice cream
- Items containing MSG (monosodium glutamate), which is a food additive and flavor enhancer
- Processed meat and fish

Sources: ADA Fact Sheet: Migraine Headaches and Food: The “Trigger Factor,” Cleveland Clinic Health System Web Site National Headache Foundation

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