



Caffeine and Headaches

Everyone gets headaches from time to time. And most of us have caffeine in what we drink and eat every day. Have you considered whether there's a connection? It's possible for caffeine to both cause and cure a headache.

How Caffeine Helps

When your head hurts, you want relief fast. Whether it's a run-of-the-mill tension headache or a migraine, caffeine can help. That's why it's an ingredient in a lot of popular pain relievers. It can make them as much as 40% more effective. Sometimes you can stop the pain in its tracks just by having caffeine alone.

Caffeine helps reduce inflammation, and that can bring relief. It also gives a boost to common headache remedies. Whether you use aspirin, ibuprofen, or acetaminophen, they work faster and better and keep the pain away for longer when combined with caffeine.

A rare condition called hypnic headaches responds especially well to caffeine. These strike older people, waking them in the middle of the night with severe pain. Doctors typically tell people who get these to have a cup of coffee before bed.

How Caffeine Hurts

Oddly enough, what makes caffeine effective in pain relief can also cause headaches. Since caffeine narrows the blood vessels that surround your brain, when you stop taking it they expand again, and that can cause pain.

It's easy for your body to get so used to the effects of caffeine that when you don't have it in your system, you have **withdrawal**. Caffeine can also be a factor in what's known as a medication overuse, or rebound headache. This can happen when you take too much of any kind of pain reliever or take it too often. When the medicine wears off, the pain comes back worse than before. When you combine caffeine with pain relievers this condition is more likely.

What You Can Do

Be aware of how caffeine affects you, and pay attention to how much of it you drink and eat. If you get migraines, or if you find yourself having headaches frequently, you may want to try to cut down on caffeine or avoid it completely. It's best to do that gradually. For example, if you normally have 2 cups of coffee in the morning, start by cutting back to one. If you quit suddenly, it can take up to a week to get past the withdrawal symptoms.

Keep track of your headaches and what seems to help. Get good sleep, and drink plenty of water. A nutritious diet and daily exercise can also help. Try to manage stress. You might be able to beat a headache with relaxation techniques, meditation, or massage instead of using medicine or caffeine.

Source: <https://www.webmd.com/migraines-headaches/guide/triggers-caffeine#1>

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