

Meal Planning Toolkit



Certain foods may be contributing to your migraine attacks. Our meal planner can help you identify and avoid your triggers.

Diet can play an important role in helping you take charge of your migraine. Eating five to six calorie-controlled portions a day can help people living with migraine in several ways: It can keep headaches at bay for those who are triggered by hunger, it can prevent weight gain that can lead to headache progression and it can help patients avoid eating any one migraine attack-triggering chemical at a time. A planned diet can also relieve stress, which is a common migraine attack trigger.

Using a meal planner can help control your diet and study your migraine patterns.

5 Types of Nutrients

To maintain a balanced diet you'll need to plan meals that incorporate the five types of nutrients: **carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals**. Each of these nutrients plays a role in maintaining your health and, in turn, helping with migraine care.

1. Complex Carbohydrates: Carbohydrates can provide your body with a short-term energy supply. You'll find them in fruits and in starchy foods like bread and pasta. Carbs can be a good source of fiber, which helps with digestion. **Carbohydrates should make up 45 to 65% of your diet.**

2. Proteins: Protein is famous for helping build muscle, but it can also provide you with energy. You can find proteins in nuts, beans, meat and eggs. **Proteins should make up 10 to 30% of your diet.**

3. Fats: Fats get a bad rap, but they actually provide your body with a long-term energy supply. You'll find healthier, unsaturated fats in oils (like olive and vegetable oils) and foods such as avocados and olives. Saturated fats, like whole-fat milk and processed snacks, are considered less healthy. **Fats, preferably unsaturated, should make up 20 to 35% of your diet.**

4. Vitamins: Vitamins help in all sorts of body processes: Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium, supporting healthy bones, while vitamin A is important for your eyesight. Vitamin B2 may actually reduce migraine attacks. Eating a diverse, balanced diet with fruits, vegetables and grains can ensure you're getting the vitamins you need. **Don't overdo it with supplements:** for some, they're a trigger.

5. Minerals: Minerals are similar to vitamins in that they help with body processes and you can get them by eating a varied, healthy diet. You're probably familiar with the mineral calcium, which maintains your bones and teeth, but iron, potassium and magnesium are also minerals that perform important functions in your body. Magnesium supplementation may actually help reduce migraine attacks.



Commonly Reported Food Triggers

While there are many benefits to pursuing a diverse diet, it is also helpful to watch out for “food triggers.” These are certain foods, including caffeine and alcohol that people living with migraine have reported may trigger headache attacks. In addition, it has been highlighted that triggers are different from cravings during the premonitory phase of migraine, and it is important to identify what can play a causative role in provoking an attack and what might only be a symptom preceding an attack.

Doctors say that while one food may not necessarily be a trigger by itself for some people, some foods can contribute to a migraine attack when people are on the “threshold” and struggling with other triggers like stress. That means people living with migraine can benefit by examining these commonly reported food triggers and seeing if those foods affect their own migraine attacks.

Here are commonly reported food triggers to watch out for:

- Alcohol, including red wine and beer
- Aspartame, an artificial sweetener and sugar substitute
- Beans and other foods that contain tyramine, like cured meat and smoked fish
- Foods that contain histamine such as pickled or canned foods – sauerkrauts
- Matured cheeses and yogurts
- Smoked meat products – salami, ham, sausages
- Shellfish
- Some legumes, including beans, lentils, peanuts, peas and soybeans
- Nuts – walnuts, cashew nuts
- Chocolates and other cocoa-based products
- Caffeine (especially caffeine withdrawal)
- Citrus like lemons and oranges
- Foods containing monosodium glutamate (more commonly known as MSG), like canned foods
- Processed meats with sulfites
- Vitamins and herbal supplements
- Dried fruit with sulfites

Do any of these foods trigger a migraine attack for you?

Tweet us at @amfmigraine to share your story.



Your headache diary can play a valuable role in helping you examine how your symptoms change as you identify or rule out food triggers, so be sure to take notes and regularly review them to see what foods, if any, are playing a role in your migraine experience.

Print out this chart or copy it into a notebook to track your diet and migraine attacks. Your doctor can help you identify patterns which may uncover foods that trigger your symptoms:

Diet				Migraine				
Time	Food	Medicine	Activity	Start Time	Pain Level	What Helped	What Did Not Help	End Time

The content in this document is provided for educational purposes only. While it is doctor-verified, it is not intended to serve as medical advice, and users are advised to seek the advice of their doctors before making any decisions based on the information in this article.



AMERICAN  **MIGRAINE**
FOUNDATION

The mission of the American Migraine Foundation is to mobilize a community for patient support and advocacy, as well as drive and support impactful research that translates into advances for patients with migraine and other disabling diseases that cause severe head pain. Visit americanmigrainefoundation.org for more resources for people living with migraine and their supporters.

American Migraine Foundation
1177 6th Avenue, 5th Floor,
New York, NY 10036
P: +1 (929)-376-1333
E: info@americanmigrainefoundation.org

