



The Headache Center Migraine Diet

Food may play a significant role in the frequency of your headaches. Although some migraine patients find that eating certain foods will provoke a headache every single time, the effect of diet may be less obvious. In general, the more "trigger" foods you consume, the more headaches you may have. The hope is that by avoiding these possible triggers, the better off you will be. Eating regularly timed meals, avoiding hunger, avoiding dehydration, and avoiding skipping meals is probably more important than the specific foods you do or do not eat.

Try following this list as strictly as possible for at least two months. If it helps, you may gradually add back your favorite foods one at a time, keeping track of your headaches as you do so.

Category	Foods to Avoid, Reduce, or Limit	Foods that are OK
Caffeine	No more than 2 servings / day. Do not vary the amount or timing from day to day. Coffee, tea, colas, Mountain Dew, Sunkist, certain medications (Anacin, Excedrin)	Decaffeinated coffee, herbal or green tea, caffeine-free sodas, fruit juice (see below)
Snacks / Desserts	Chocolate, nuts (peanuts, especially), seeds	Fruits listed below, sherbet, ice cream, cakes, pudding, Jello, sugar, jam, jelly, honey, hard candy, cookies made w/o chocolate or nuts
Alcohol	Avoid all, especially: ales, Burgundy, chianti, malted beers, red wine, sherry, vermouth. Note: some medications contain alcohol (Nyquil)	Non-alcoholic beverages
Dairy	Certain cheeses (aged or fermented): Brie, blue, boursault, brick, Camembert, cheddar, Emmentaler, gouda, mozzarella, Parmesan, Provolone, Romano, Roquefort, stilton, Swiss Buttermilk, chocolate milk, sour cream Eggs	Other cheeses: American, cottage, cream cheese, farmer, ricotta, Velveeta. Milk, yogurt Egg substitute
Cereals & Grains	Fresh breads and yeast products, fresh bagels, fresh doughnuts, yeast extracts, brewer's yeast, sourdough	Commercial breads (white, wheat, rye, multi-grain, Italian), English Muffins, crackers, rye, toast, bagels, potatoes, rice, spaghetti, noodles, hot or dried cereals, oatmeal
Meats	Aged, canned, cured, or processed meats (bologna, pepperoni, salami, other pre-packaged deli meats), pickled meats or fish, salted or dried meats or poultry, hot dogs, sausages, jerky	Fresh / unprocessed meats, poultry, fish, lamb, pork, veal, lamb, tuna
MSG (monosodium glutamate)	Avoid in all its multiple forms: Soy sauce, foods containing "hydrolyzed protein products" or "autolyzed yeast", canned soups, bouillon cubes, Accent, meat tenderizers, seasoned salts. Pickled, preserved or marinated foods	Salt and other spices, butter, margarine, cooking oil, white vinegar, salad dressing (small amounts)
Sweeteners	Aspartame (Equal, Nutrasweet) (somewhat controversial)	Sucrose (sugar), high fructose corn syrup, sucralose (Splenda), saccharin (Sweet 'n Low)
Vegetables	Pole or broad beans, lima beans, Italian beans, lentils, snow peas, fava beans, Navy beans, pinto beans, pea pods, sauerkraut, garbanzo beans, onions, olives, pickles	Asparagus, beets, broccoli, carrots, corn, lettuce, pumpkins, spinach, squash, string beans, tomatoes—all those not listed
Fruit	Avocados, figs, papaya, passion fruit, raisins, red plums. Limit bananas and citrus fruit (orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit, tangerines)	Apples, berries, peaches, pears, prunes, fruit cocktail
Mixed Dishes	Beef stroganoff, cheese blintzes, frozen meals / TV dinners, lasagna, macaroni and cheese, pizza	

Note that tyramine, nitrites, nitrates, and MSG are found in many foods and may be difficult to avoid. Learn to read labels.

While there are few consistent scientific studies of the effect of food on headaches, there is a general consensus about which foods may be important to avoid. The above list is drawn from various sources including the National Headache Foundation, journal articles, websites (<http://www.rutgersheadacheclinic.com/diet.asp>) and books (such as David Buchholz's *Heal Your Headache: The 1-2-3 Program for Taking Charge of Your Pain*).