



Dr. Chalfin's Headaches Guide

What to Do If you Get a Headache?

- Jot it down. Track triggers.
- **Always take your Rescue Medication at the first sign of your headache.** Jot the time down.
 - **Abortive or Rescue** Medication is medication you take to STOP a current headache.
 - Examples: triptan, NSAID, Tylenol, Excedrin, Ubrelvy, Nurtec, etc.
- Do NOT take rescue medication on more than **2 DAYS per week**.
- Some rescue medications can be re-dosed in a couple hours if you did not get enough relief.
- Jot down later if the medication helped, how quickly, and any side effects you may have felt.
- You can also:
 - Take a hot shower
 - Lay down and rest in a dark, quiet, cool room
 - Use a cold compress, cold cap, or cold slippers.

How to Prevent Headaches?

1. **Medication overuse** – Make sure you're not using *any* pain medication (OTC, prescribed, narcotic, triptan, anything) more than 2 days per week. If you are, start limiting it.
2. **Caffeine** – can cause headaches, especially in people who are prone to migraines. Try to wean off caffeine for at least 2 months.
3. **Hydration** – stay hydrated! Try to keep a bottle of water handy and drink whenever you're thirsty, at least 8 cups per day, preferably water. Drink an extra cup for any caffeine you drink, or if you exercise, have a fever, or are sick.
4. **Sleep** – try to get a solid 7-8 hours of sleep per night if possible. Go to sleep at the same time each night and try to wake up at the same time each morning (even on weekends). Get rid of screens and other devices from the bedroom. If you have problems sleeping, speak to your doctor.
5. **Exercise** – regular exercise can reduce headache frequency and severity. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week, including some strength/resistance training. Bonus: exercise has also been shown to reduce the risk of stroke, heart attack, dementia, Parkinson's disease, and diabetes!
6. **Avoidance of triggers** – Use a headache diary or calendar (Migraine Mentor app is one) to keep track of headaches and possible triggers. Some people can have their migraines provoked by MSG (e.g., found in many packaged or Asian foods), cheese, wine or other alcohol, chocolate, processed meats, or other foods; skipping meals, by getting less sleep than usual, by bright lights, by smoke, noise, strong odors, or by stress. Once you identify them, try to avoid these triggers to the best of your ability.
7. **Relaxation** – Find ways to relax (e.g., exercise, coloring, watching a funny show, reading for pleasure, listening to music) for at least 15 minutes per day. Breathing exercises and mindful meditation can help. If you are suffering from depression or anxiety, find a therapist or speak to your doctor.
8. **Nutraceuticals** - 400mg each of Magnesium, Riboflavin (Vitamin B2), and CoQ10 have all been shown to help with headaches. They also sell "Migrelief" supplements on Amazon which some patients have gotten help from.
9. **Preventive or Prophylactic** Medication is Medication you take regularly to decrease your overall frequency and severity of headaches. Ask your doctor what's available.