

Seven Weird Things That Could Be Triggering Migraines

No one wants to get a migraine, ever. If you suffer from chronic migraines, you probably cringe at the thought of having one but at least have some tools to combat them. But if you get sporadic migraines — or just experienced one for the first time — the crippling pain can come with a serious side of confusion about why exactly you got one in the first place.

There's still a lot that experts don't understand about migraines, but there are a few things they do know.

For starters, migraines can cause severe pain or a pulsing feeling, usually on just one side of the head, according to the Mayo Clinic. And unfortunately, migraines usually come along with nausea, vomiting and sensitivity to light and sound. Some people may even experience something called an "aura," which

can be flashes of light, blind spots or tingling on one side of your face or in your arm or leg. Doctors think there are several different mechanisms behind why you might get a migraine, although "it's not completely understood," said Dr. Katherine S. Carroll, a neurologist and migraine expert at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

It's believed that there's a wave of electricity that spread across a person's cortex (the wrinkly, outer layer that surrounds the brain), leading to the release of inflammatory mediators, Carroll said. These irritate the nerves in the brain, including the trigeminal nerve (the largest of the cranial nerves), creating the migraine's pain.

It's also known that levels of serotonin, which helps regulate pain in your nervous system, drop when people have migraines, although the exact role this plays is unclear, according to the Mayo Clinic. This might cause your trigeminal nerve to release molecules called neuropeptides, which then travel to your meninges (the outer covering of your brain) and cause inflammation, said Dr. Amit Sachdev, an assistant professor and director of the Division of Neuromuscular Medicine at Michigan State University.

Whatever the cause, migraines all boil down to one major symptom: crippling pain. That pain can last anywhere from hours to days, which is why it's completely understandable that you'd want to know what's causing them and avoid them in the future. There are a few migraine triggers you've probably heard of before, like stress, bright lights and wine, but there are plenty of others that should be on your radar.



Keep these in mind the next time you're grappling with pain:

Hormonal birth control

Women tend to start getting migraines when they begin menstruating and those who have chronic migraines tend to get them right before their period starts, said Dr. Brinder Vij, associate director of the University of Cincinnati's Health Headache & Facial Pain Center. Changes in estrogen, in particular, seem to trigger migraines in women. "The fall in estrogen before a woman's period may be a mechanism that triggers the process for some women," Vij said. And for some reason, hormonal birth control pills seem to make it worse in some people, Vij added.

Salty foods

Salty foods can affect your blood pressure. Specifically, they increase the amount of sodium in your bloodstream and mess with your kidney's ability to remove water. Your body responds with higher blood pressure — and that can create an environment that's ripe for migraines in people predisposed to them, said Dr. Ilan Danan, a neurologist at the Center for Sports Neurology and Pain Medicine at Cedars-Sinai Kerlan-Jobe Institute in Los Angeles.

Aged cheeses

It's not completely clear why aged cheeses may set off migraine pain, but tyramine, a substance found in them, has been linked, Sachdev said. Still, eating aged cheeses doesn't mean you're guaranteed to get a migraine, even if you suffer from them. "Some patients can get a migraine after eating these cheeses; others don't," Vij said.

Artificial sweeteners

Beware what you're adding to your coffee. Artificial sweeteners such as aspartame can be migraine-starters. It's thought that these sweeteners lower serotonin levels in a person's body, which can then trigger the release of neuropeptides and set off a chain reaction that leads to a migraine, Carroll said.

Jet lag

This is a big one, Carroll said. Any sort of disruption in sleep, like flying between time zones, can be a trigger for migraines. Cabin pressure from flying may even play a role, she said, since it can cause dilation in blood vessels that can be a part of the migraine response.

Changes in weather

When the weather shifts, changes in barometric and atmospheric pressure also occur — and those are thought to be directly related to migraines, Danan said. As a result, fluctuations in the weather can trigger migraines in sufferers. "I hear this mentioned by my patients quite often," Carroll said.

Skipping meals

A regular eating schedule is crucial for those who experience migraines. Missing a meal or eating long past your usual time can cause a drop in your blood glucose. And that can cause a chemical change in your body that can be a migraine trigger, Carroll said.

If you're struggling with migraines and you have no idea what's behind them, it's important to keep a migraine diary and write down what you did and ate on the days when you have a migraine, as well the weather conditions, she said. For women, writing down menstrual cycle information is important, too. Then, go back and see if there are any common factors.

Consistency is key here, Vij added. If you had a migraine after you had aspartame once, but didn't the other nine times you had it, it's pretty unlikely that's your trigger, he said. And, of course, talk to your doctor about your symptoms and medication that can help prevent migraines, as well as ease your pain when they do happen.

This Week's Exercise

SEATED HURDLER

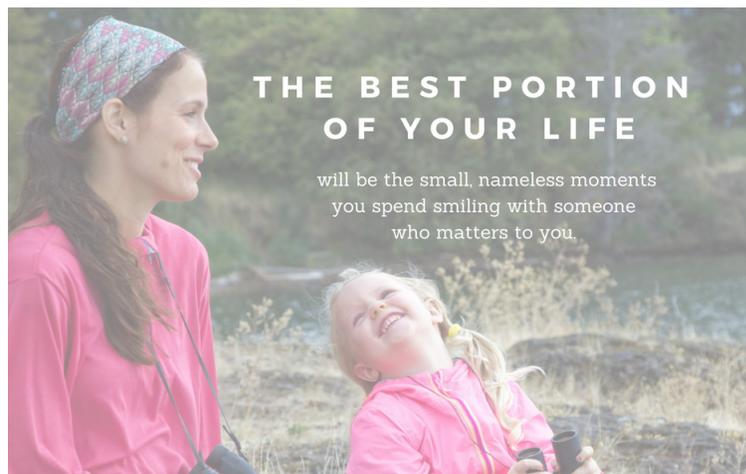


Open up the hamstrings and hips with this relaxing stretch that can be done immediately after the balancing side plank pose.

HOW TO DO IT: Sit with your left leg extended and your right knee bent and open to the side with the bottom of your right foot pressed against your left thigh. (Bring your right foot as close to your body as is comfortable.) Bend forward from your hips and reach toward your left foot, grabbing hold of your toes or shins. Hold for 30 seconds, and then repeat on the other side.

Exercise source: <http://bit.ly/2lBqk4G>

Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.





CHEESECAKE BROWNIES

Ingredients

Nonstick cooking spray
2 large eggs
3/4 cup finely ground almond meal or flour (such as Bob's Red Mill)
1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1/8 teaspoon kosher salt
3/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 cup raw honey
2 teaspoons vanilla extract, divided
1/2 cup semisweet chocolate chips
6 ounces 1/3 less fat cream cheese, softened in the microwave
2 tablespoons sugar

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F. Spray a nonstick 9 x 9-inch baking pan with cooking spray and line with two strips of parchment 8 inches wide and long enough to leave a 2-inch overhang on all sides.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk 1 large whole egg with 1 egg yolk (separate the whites and reserve, set aside).
3. Add 1/4 cup water, the honey, and 1 teaspoon of the vanilla and stir with the spatula until combined.
4. In a large bowl, whisk together the almond meal, cocoa powder, salt, and baking soda.
5. Pour the egg mixture into the bowl with the dry mixture and mix well with a spatula. Fold in the chocolate chips.
6. Pour the batter into the prepared baking pan.
7. Soften the package of cream cheese in the microwave, mix in sugar, reserved egg white and remaining 1 teaspoon vanilla.
8. Pour over the brownie mix and spread over the top with a spatula, marbelize the with a toothpick.
9. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean, about 30 minutes.
10. Let cool for at least 30 minutes before cutting into 12 bars.

Nutrition Information

Yield: 12 servings
Serving Size: 1 brownie

Amount Per Serving:
Freestyle Points: 7
Points +: 5
Calories: 182
Total Fat: 10g
Saturated Fat: 4g
Cholesterol: 34.5mg
Sodium: 164mg
Carbohydrates: 21g
Fiber: 1.5g
Sugar: 18g
Protein: 4g

Recipe source:
<http://bit.ly/2IBD4Gx>