

AHS Complementary and Integrative Medicine Section: Patient Education Kit for Migraine

A Word to Providers:

What it is: The CIM Section's Patient Education Kit for Migraine is a collection of evidence-based recommendations for lifestyle modifications that can help patients improve their migraine frequency and severity over time. Much of the information is sourced from our members and is based on what they use in their own practices. The final product is a concise collection of helpful recommendations, which includes references of the supporting literature.

How to use it: The information can be incorporated into SmartPhrases, in the electronic medical record, which can be shared with patients and/or their referring physicians in visit notes, patient instructions, or other patient handouts.

Introduction: Lifestyle modification is an integral and evidence-based component of migraine treatment. We encourage you to gradually develop helpful, long-term habits that you will continue to maintain throughout your lifetime. It requires dedication and it is a work in progress.

Topics

Nutrition: There are many common and wide-spread suggestions for dietary interventions for migraine. But there has not been sufficient scientific evidence for any major medical organization to recommend a specific dietary intervention for migraine.¹ However, there is growing research in this field. The following are evidence-based suggestions to consider:

- **Eating Habits:** Keeping a consistent meal schedule can be helpful. Avoid fasting or skipping meals. Try to eat small, frequent meals. Consider keeping snacks with you.^{2,3}
- **Food Triggers:** You may have heard about a classic list of foods that trigger migraine, but ultimately, food triggers are very individual. Don't spend too much time and energy journaling or fixating on food triggers. Know the ingredients of the foods you are eating. For example, sometimes it is hard to know exactly what goes into processed foods. If you identify specific foods that consistently trigger migraine, then consider avoiding those foods.⁴
- **Hydration:** Dehydration is a common trigger of migraine. Maintaining adequate hydration can be helpful. An individual's hydration needs depend on physical activity, temperature, altitude, dietary factors, and medications taken.⁵
- **Dietary Supplements:** Research has found that some dietary supplements such as magnesium, riboflavin, and coenzyme Q10, at specific doses can be helpful for migraine prevention. For more information, please see [link to Part 2 Nutrition Supplement Section].
- **Weight Management:** Studies show that migraine attack frequency and severity increase with body mass index⁶ and obesity is associated with a higher risk of progressing from episodic to chronic migraine.⁷ In some cases, you may need guidance from a dietician, doctor, or other specialist.

References:

1. Slavin et al. What is Needed for Evidence-Based Dietary Recommendations for Migraine: A Call to Action for Nutrition and Microbiome Research. *Headache: The Journal of Head and Face Pain* 59.9 (2019): 1566-1581.
2. Houle TT, et al. Nighttime snacking, stress, and migraine activity. *Journal of Clinical Neuroscience*. 2014;21:638-643.

3. Hindiyyeh N, Zhang N, Farrar M, Banerjee P, Lombard L, Aurora S. The role of diet and nutrition in migraine triggers and treatment: A systematic literature review. *Headache*. 2020;60(7):1300-1316.
4. Martin, VT & Vij, B. (2016). Diet and headache: part 1. *Headache: The Journal of Head and Face Pain*, 56(9), 1543-1552.
5. Perrier ET. Shifting focus: From hydration for performance to hydration for health. *Ann Nutr Metab*. 2017;70:4-12.
6. Bigal ME, Liberman JN, Lipton RB. Obesity and migraine: A population study. *Neurology*. 2006;66(4).
7. Gelaye B, et al. Body composition status and the risk of migraine: A meta-analysis. *Neurology*. 2017;88:1795-1804.