

ENT SURGICAL CONSULTANTS

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Migraines: An ENT Perspective

Migraines are a common, yet very under diagnosed clinical problem. *Classic* migraines are characterized by episodic attacks of head pain and associated symptoms such as nausea and sensitivity to light, sound or head movement. Migraines are generally thought of as subset of “headache” disorders, with classic migraines typically featuring unilateral (one-sided) headache as a dominant symptom. Through emerging evidence and evolving perspective in recent years, it has become apparent that many migraine sufferers may have little or no headache as a symptom. These “*atypical migraine*” sufferers may have primary complaints consisting of :

- Dizziness/ vertigo/ recurrent BPPV (positional vertigo)
- Ear/ head pain (often “sharp” and “stabbing”)
- “Sinus” pressure/congestion (seen in 40% of migraine sufferers)
- Fluctuating hearing loss
- Ringing in the ears (tinnitus)
- Visual alteration
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (cyclical vomiting/ abdominal migraine/ periodic diarrhea)

Prevalence

28 million Americans with “classic” migraine headaches
Females are 3 times more likely than males
Peak incidence is between 30-50 years of age
At age 35, 28% of all females have migraine headaches
It is estimated that <50% of migraine sufferers have been diagnosed/treated

Pathogenesis

Migraine is an inherited problem of ion channels in the brain. Migraine sufferers have a hard time adapting to strong stimuli such as loud noise, bright light, or excessive motion; in essence, migraine sufferers have a relatively “sensitive brain.” These stimuli can produce abnormal electrical activity in, on, or around the brain, which can then result in a migraine attack.

Migraine Triggers

A migraine trigger is any environmental, dietary, or physiologic factor that can provoke migraine activity in the brain.

Environmental triggers: -odors

- bright lights
- weather (sensitive to cold, wind, barometric changes)

Food triggers: 2 main categories

- 1) byproducts of food aging (e.g., fermented products such as red wine, aged cheeses, yeast in fresh bread and yogurt)
- 2) foods with chemicals similar to neurotransmitters (“brain messengers”) (e.g., coffee, chocolate, MSG, nitrates used as preservatives in prepackaged foods)

{FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF FOOD TRIGGERS, SEE APPENDIX 1}

Physiologic triggers: -stress (probably the most important trigger!!!!)

- fatigue/ irregular sleep patterns
- hunger
- pain (e.g., neck injury and spasm, temporomandibular joint (TMJ) pain, sinus pain)
- hormone changes (e.g., drop in estrogen before menstrual period or after menopause)

-eye strain

Treatments

1. Trigger identification and avoidance
 - Migraine diary
 - Dietary changes
 - Main triggers: Chocolate, wines, caffeine, aged cheeses, MSG, yeast, nuts
 - Stress management
 - Improved sleep habits
 - Regular exercise
 - Avoid the “Vicious cycle” (narcotics, caffeine, decongestants (e.g., pseudoephedrine), “catch-up” sleep)
2. Correct the correctable
 - Eye exam
 - Sinusitis management
 - TMJ treatment (soft diet, warm compresses, mouth guard)
3. Medications: 2 categories
 - Medications to elevate the threshold (i.e., make the brain less “sensitive”)
 - Many were originally used to treat depression, seizures, blood pressure
 - Common initial medication is Nortriptyline (main side effects: sedation (so take at bedtime), dry mouth)
 - May often take 6-8 weeks to respond
 - Medications to abort acute attacks
 - Because they can cause rebound, should not be used more than 6-8 times per month

Additional Resources

-*“Heal Your Headache, the 1-2-3 Program,”* author David Bucholz, M.D.

-*“Migraine,”* author Oliver Sacks, M.D.

-For more comprehensive information on this topic, Google “Migraine Delaware Biotechnology Institute,” look for “Teixedo Patient Information.”

APPENDIX 1

Seasoning	Flavored snacks	Olives	Tea
Aged meats	Flavorings	Onions	Tenderized meats
Anchovies	Fresh beef liver	Oranges and juice	Textured protein
Autolyzed yeast		Papayas	Tyramine
Avocados		Parmesan cheese	
	Fresh bread	Passion fruit	Ultra-pasteurized items
	Frozen yogurt	Pate	
Bacon		Pea pods	
Bagels	Garbanzo beans	Pepperoni	Vegetable protein
Bananas	Gelatin	Pickled fish	Veggie burgers
Beef jerky	Fresh bread	Pickles	
Blue cheese	Frozen yogurt	Pineapples and juice	
Bouillons		Pinto beans	Whey protein
Breadcrumbs		Pizza	Wild game
Brewers yeast	Garbanzo beans		
Brick cheese	Gelatin	Pizza dough	Yeast
Brie cheese	Glutamic acid	Plant protein	Yeast extract
Broad Italian beans	Grapefruits and juice	Processed meats	Yogurt
Broth	Gravy	Protein concentrates	
Buttermilk	Gruyere cheese	Protein fortified items	
		Provolone	
Calcium caseinate	Hams		
Camembert cheese	Heavy alcohol drinks	Raisins	
Canned meats	Hot dogs	Raspberries	
Carrageenan	Hydrolyzed protein	Ready-to-eat meals	
Caviar		Red plums	
Champagne		Red vinegar	
Cheap buffets	Iced tea	Red wine	
Cheddar cheese		Restaurant food	
Cheese spread	Kombu (seaweed extract)	Rice protein	
Chicken livers		Romano cheese	
Chinese food		Roquefort cheese	
Chocolate	Lemons and juice		
Clementines	Lima beans		
Coffee	Limes and juice	Saccharin	
Coffee cake	Lentils	Salami	
Coffee substitutes	Liverwurst	Salty snacks	
Cola	Low calorie foods	Sauerkraut	
Croutons	Low fat foods	Sausage	
Cultured items	Lunchmeats	Seasoned salt	
Cured meats		Smoked fish	
		Smoked meats	
Dark alcohol drinks	Malt extract	Snow peas	
Dates	Malted barley	Sodium caseinate	
Decaf coffee	Maltodextrin	Soft pretzels	
Decaf tea	Marinated meats	Soups	
Doughnuts	Mozzarella cheese	Sour cream	
Dried fruits with sulfites	MSG	Soy products	
	Muenster cheese	Soy protein	
		Soy protein concentrate	
Enzyme modified items	Natural flavors	Soy protein isolate	
	Navy beans	Soy sauce	
Fava beans	Nitrates	Stilton cheese	
Fermented items	Nitrites	Sulfites	
Fermented meats	Nut butters	Sweet n' Low	
Feta cheese	Nutrisweet		
Figs	Nuts		