

There has been a lot of talk about “migraine triggers,” including diet, exercise and sleeping habits. The most controversial is the idea of food triggers. “Although many people believe that some foods may trigger a migraine, the evidence remains a bit fuzzy,” says Elizabeth Loder, MD, MPH, the chief of the Division of Headache and Pain at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston. Loder points out that it is difficult to track food triggers because different foods may affect people in different ways. There’s also no consensus about how long it might take a dietary culprit to set off a headache so it’s difficult to pin down which foods are the real trouble makers.



Some commonly “accused” foods include; aged cheese, alcohol and specifically red wine, artificial sweeteners, chocolate, citrus fruits, coffee, tea, cola, MSG’s, Nitrates in cured and processed meats (hot dogs and lunch meats), nuts and peanut butter and salty foods. This covers a lot of food, but not all foods are triggers for all headache sufferers, they vary from person to person and it is difficult to track them like Loder commented. Food triggers remain controversial; however, one that isn’t controversial is the role of alcohol. Alcohol can have an immediate (within 3 hours) or delayed “hangover” effect.

Light and moderate drinkers seem to be more susceptible headaches than heavy drinkers, possibly because those who regularly drink wouldn’t be regulars if alcohol made them really sick.

So, what are some surefire ways to ask for a headache? There are several known “triggers” for migraines. Skipping meals altogether is one way to beg for a headache. “Fasting may alter brain chemicals or hormones or shift the metabolic processes somehow,” Loder explains.

Going for as little as five hours without food is enough to bring on a pounding headache in some people. Caffeine is another common culprit, but it can actually go either way, it can be good

news or bad news for migraine sufferers.

Good news, you could ease a

migraine by sipping coffee, caffeine is a mild pain reliever; it helps constrict blood vessels and can increase the absorption of other pain medications. So, starting the day with a java jolt could help prevent headaches. For the bad news, once the stimulating effects of caffeine wear off, some people “crash” especially if you’ve skipped a meal. And, caffeine can dehydrate you as well. After the caffeine high has worn off, some suffer from “rebound” or “withdrawal” headaches.

If you do suspect a certain food is a trigger – avoid it! However, maintaining a hardcore “anti-migraine diet” may not be worth the typically meager results. Loder says, “we counsel patients to watch for associations between what they eat and how they feel but not to get so caught up in the process that they make themselves crazy.”

(This information from [dietsinreview.com](http://dietsinreview.com))