



# MANAGING MIGRAINES

## Through nutrition & Lifestyle



**CALIBRATION**  
CHIROPRACTIC + FUNCTIONAL HEALTH

- 01 Introduction
- 02 Treatment Options
- 03 Know Your Triggers
- 04 Supplemental Support
- 05 Supplemental Support
- 06 Diet & Lifestyle Considerations
- 07 Guidelines at a Glance
- 08 References

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# Table of CONTENTS



# Understanding Migraines

## INTRODUCTION



There can be a lot of misconception and confusion when it comes to migraines and headaches, but those who deal with migraine disorders are well aware that a migraine is MUCH more than a headache. A migraine is a complex brain disorder that can be debilitating in nature, and is the second highest cause of disability in the world. If you're reading this, you likely have experienced one and want help.

While a migraine can affect any age and gender, it is much more common in women than men with a 3:1 ratio, and it typically presents during peak years of productivity, which can really hinder your ability to check off all the things on your to do list. You may feel alone at times, but you're not alone. More than 1 billion people across the world deal with migraines, and this number may be higher as it is estimated that 50% of migraine patients are undiagnosed and under treated.<sup>1</sup>

While the exact cause of migraines is not currently clear, there is research suggesting it has to do with brain excitability or inflammation from environmental factors, and there may be a genetic predisposition in many people who deal with this disorder.<sup>2</sup> If you have an immediate family member dealing with migraines, you have a much higher risk of also dealing with them. In fact, 30-60% of cases are linked to hereditary and genetic causes.<sup>3</sup> However, just having a family member who is prone to migraines isn't an automatic headache sentence for you. There are many other factors that can trigger and predispose you to the onset of this massive pain in the head. We will go into these more in depth in this booklet.

A migraine is usually on one side of the head, but it can be on both, and it presents with a moderate to severe throbbing or pulsing type of head pain. A migraine typically presents with sensitivity to movement, visual input, and auditory input. There is often a prodromal period that can begin 1-2 days before the migraine sets in. In this prodromal period it can be common to feel more tired or begin to experience visual changes called "auras". A single migraine can last up to several days.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for migraines. The best route is management of the condition to decrease the number and frequency of migraine attacks, whether that is dealing with a migraine in progress or looking for ways to prevent future attacks. Migraine management requires that numerous different factors be taken into account and can include: pharmaceuticals, hormones, stress, genetics, and nutrition. New research is even showing that biofeedback and stress management are playing a huge role in treatment.<sup>4</sup> One of the biggest and most complicated areas to navigate when dealing with migraine management is nutrition. There isn't a "one size fits all" diet, but our hope is that this resource makes navigating the nutritional approaches to migraine management much easier and more accessible.

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Managing the condition is key. We can help.

# Treatment OPTIONS



## 1

### Pharmaceuticals

A large majority of migraine patients turn to medication to help manage the symptoms, and while it is a great tool that we have available, it can pose some problems with adherence, cost, and side effects. Additionally, it can take up to 6 months for the medication to reach maximum therapeutic effects.<sup>5</sup> Some of the more commonly prescribed medications include Propranolol, Topiramate, Lisinopril, and Triptans. Some of the side effects can include dizziness, sleep difficulty, nausea, vomiting, constipation, depression, and loss of appetite.



## 2

### Botox

More people than ever before are turning to botox to help alleviate the presence and onset of migraines, and it is showing improvement in symptoms. It has been incorporated in chronic migraine care for well over 10 years and has great success rate. However, botox can be costly to keep up with and the success of the therapy depends almost entirely on the skill of the practitioner.<sup>6</sup> Botox application can be uncomfortable in the moment, but when you're trading temporary pain from an injection for the chronic pain from a migraine, it's a no brainer for many people, and it has fewer side effects than medication.

## 3

### Bodywork

Bodywork applications for migraine management include:

- Chiropractic
- Acupuncture
- Massage
- Physical therapy
- Craniosacral therapy

Bodywork is an important area of consideration due to the fact that aside from neurological, hormonal, and nutritional components, the musculoskeletal system, especially the neck, can be a contributing component in many migraine patients.



## 4

### Mind + Body Approaches

Mind-Body approaches for migraine management include:

- Neurofeedback / Biofeedback
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Yoga & Meditation

Migraines can be made worse with rumination, stress, and body tension. Mind-body approaches teach you how to recognize and cope with various triggers, release stored tension in the body, and gives you the tools to function better in daily life.



# Know Your Food TRIGGERS

## Alcohol & Wine

If you have migraines, you've likely heard that red wine is a no-go, but all alcoholic beverages can contribute to migraines equally. Alcoholic beverages increase histamine levels in the body. When histamine is elevated, so is inflammation, and inflammation can spur on a migraine. Additionally, alcohol relaxes blood vessels, which increases blood flow and can trigger migraines.



## Chocolate

Don't throw all your chocolate out yet! While many people report it to be a trigger in their migraine attacks, research has yet to draw the correlation between the two. It is possible that cravings for chocolate increase prior to migraines, which makes it appear as a trigger. Our recommendation with chocolate isn't to necessarily avoid it, but to take note of when you're craving it. These times of cravings may be clues as to when a migraine might start.<sup>7</sup>

## Caffeine

A warm cup of coffee can be good for the soul, but sip slowly. Caffeine increases dilation of blood vessels, and as mentioned with alcohol, this dilation can trigger migraine attacks. People who chronically use caffeine are more susceptible to caffeine being a direct trigger, and this can also be linked to the dehydration and magnesium loss induced from too much caffeine. The opposite side to caffeine use is caffeine withdrawal, which is also a trigger.<sup>8</sup>



## Processed Meats

That charcuterie board may look pretty, but you might want to opt for the grapes over the meats. Processed meats like this, as well as hot dogs, lunch meats, and bacon, are usually paired with preservatives and nitrates, which can be implicated in migraine attacks. Nitrates are another element that causes blood vessel dilation and inflammation. A healthy alternative can be uncured versions of these products.

## MSG & Aspartame

While both MSG (monosodium glutamate) and aspartame are approved to be used in food products, both can have toxic effects on the nervous system. MSG is excitatory to the central nervous system, and people suffering with migraines have easily excitable brains. Aspartame, found in diet sodas and many sugar-free gums, is thought to inhibit dopamine and serotonin, and lower levels of both these are related to migraine onset. Safer options include natural substances like stevia or honey.



Everyone has different triggers, and often more than one. It's important to know your individual triggers, but these are a few of the most common ones we see.

The foundational trio:

Mg

B2

CoQ10

# SUPPLEMENTAL SUPPORT



1

## Magnesium (Mg)

Magnesium is responsible for many biochemical and nerve related functions throughout the body. A deficiency in serum magnesium can be indicated in a few neurological conditions, including migraines.<sup>9</sup> When migraines are a concern, magnesium is especially helpful for those with auras or menstrual related migraines.<sup>10</sup> You can help boost your magnesium levels through oral supplementation of 400-600 mg/day, IV application, or diet. Foods that offer high amounts of magnesium include: avocados, green leafy vegetables like spinach, flax or pumpkin seeds, cashews, bananas, and tuna.



2

## Riboflavin (B2)

Riboflavin has a role in energy production and is noted as a useful supplement in helping to maintain a lower migraine attack number, meaning it is good for prevention (but perhaps not as useful in stopping a migraine in progress). It is<sup>11</sup> suggested that up to 400 mg/day is needed to be of benefit in prevention. Most people get less than this each day. Foods such as eggs, salad greens, yogurt, lean meats, and fortified grains offer B2, but supplementation is encouraged to get to 400 mg/day. Some specialists encourage taking B2 with Mg and CoQ10 daily to help maximize the effects of B2.



3

## Coenzyme Q10 (Co-Q10)

Coenzyme Q10 is an antioxidant that helps facilitate cellular energy and decrease oxidative stress. While it hasn't been shown to decrease the intensity of a migraine, it has been successful at decreasing both the duration of an attack and the frequency of attacks. By taking 300 mg/ day of CoQ10, you can help to keep migraines at bay!<sup>12</sup> This particular substance is challenging to obtain through diet alone, so it is highly encouraged to look for supplementation. Ideally, spread the 300 mg/day out to 100 mg doses taken three times a day.

The relief trio:  
CBD  
Ginger  
Butterbur

# SUPPLEMENTAL SUPPORT



## 4

### CBD

CBD is the non-psychoactive component of cannabis. CBD oil has yet to be widely studied for a lot of health conditions, but many people report a reduction in migraines and headaches after incorporating it into their life. It is well known that CBD oil has an effect on the endocannabinoid receptors in the brain, which can play a role in inflammation and pain regulation. CBD oil is helpful even at the onset of a migraine attack. The best way to incorporate this is through 50-200 mg in oral drops taken under the tongue. This method is much faster for relief than through an edible or capsule.



## 5

### Ginger

Ginger is often a kitchen staple and is a root with medicinal properties and anti-inflammatory components. It has been helpful for many people in alleviating the nausea, vomiting, and pain that comes with migraines attacks.<sup>13</sup> When nausea and vomiting are a concern, ginger is shown to nearly cut those symptoms in half.<sup>14</sup> Aside from taking ginger in the form of capsules and extracts, you can also drink a tea made with warm water and a teaspoon of fresh ground ginger.

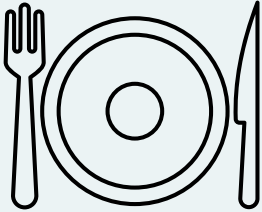


## 6

### Butterbur

Butterbur is an extract drawn from the butterbur plant and has compounds in it that are anti-inflammatory and can decrease spasms. While it can have benefit for migraine patients, we recommend to only take butterbur under the guidance and supervision of a health care provider as it can have toxic side effects for the liver.<sup>15</sup> We also don't endorse using this as a daily supplement to help prevent migraine attacks. Rather, it is safer to consider this as an aid in helping when a migraine is already in process.

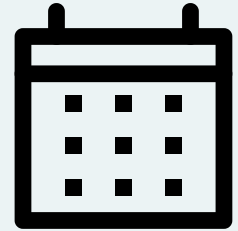
# Diet & Lifestyle CONSIDERATIONS



Eat often to avoid blood sugar dips, and don't skip meals.



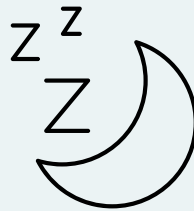
Make healthy foods, especially fruits and veggies, the staple of your diet.



Manage stress by scheduling things, including self care!



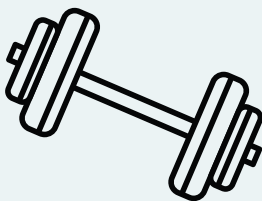
Avoid or limit alcoholic beverages.



Get 7-9 hours of consistent sleep each night.



Give yoga and meditation a try.



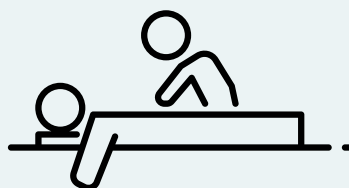
Work out at least 3 times a week for at least 30 minutes each time.



Limit caffeine consumption.



Drink at least eight 8 ounces glasses of water each day.



Go see a chiropractor, massage therapist and/or acupuncturist.



## What to AVOID



- Alcohol and Wine
- Chocolate (at times)
- Caffeine
- Processed Meat
- MSG
- Aspartame
- Citrus

- Fasting
- Skipping Breakfast
- High Sodium Foods
- Sedentary Behavior
- High Sugar Foods
- Poor sleep
- Any known triggers

## What to INCLUDE



- Clean meats
- Wild caught fish
- Berries
- Nuts & Seeds
- Whole Grains
- Healthy fats (EVOO, coconut oil, ghee)
- Water

- Snack Often
- Exercises 3 times / week
- Consistent sleep
- Stress management
- Bodywork

\*Plus the supplements below

### How to STOP a Migraine

- Magnesium: 400-600 mg/day
- Ginger: 400 mg
- Butterbur: 50-75 mg twice/day
- CBD: 100-200 mg/day
- Chamomile Lotion
- Ice on the sides of the neck
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation

### How to PREVENT a Migraine

- Magnesium: 400-600 mg/day
- B2: 200-400 mg/day
- Co-Q10: 300-400 mg/day
- B12: 400 mcg/ day
- Omega-3: 2500 mg/day
- Butterbur: 50-75 mg twice/day
- Feverfew: 6.25 mg 3x/day

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let's get in touch:

817.779.3435

[www.calibrationmansfield.com](http://www.calibrationmansfield.com)

[info@calibrationchiropractic.com](mailto:info@calibrationchiropractic.com)