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## MIGRAINE: LIFESTYLE ADVICE

**Some lifestyle changes, including getting adequate sleep, the right diet, exercise, and proper rehydration can help reduce the number of times you get migraines.**

Trying out some lifestyle changes which most likely will help reduce the number of migraine bouts you experience as well as the severity of each attack.

Several triggers can bring on a migraine attack, but not all the time and not in every migraine sufferer:

- Alcohol
- Certain foods
- Dehydration
- Fasting
- Lack of sleep, too much sleep, irregular sleeping patterns, and restless sleep
- Stress
- Menstruation
- Flickering lights
- Certain smells, especially some perfumes
- Weather – particularly changes in weather such as from sunny to stormy

### What can you do to reduce your migraine frequency?

**Exercise:** Many migraine patients avoid doing exercise because physical exertion may be one of their triggers. However, there are certain exercises that can be good for migraine sufferers. Researchers at the Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, developed an exercise program that can safely improve fitness among migraine sufferers without triggering attacks. Yoga, tai-chi and other mind/body exercises could be useful in managing migraine. This may work by reducing stress, a well-documented trigger.

**Food and drink:** Certain foods and drinks are thought to trigger migraine attacks. Migraine triggers affect sufferers in different ways, and sometimes not at all. You need to find which foods or drinks trigger your attacks and either avoid them or consume them less. The most common foods/drinks linked to migraines are: *Alcoholic drinks, especially wine, Caffeine (too much or its withdrawal in regular drinkers), processed foods, salty foods (MSG), some beans and nuts*

**Stress:** Susceptible people who have a lot of stress in their lives are more likely to sufferer from frequent headaches. Patients should consider ways to lower that stress, although in practice this can be difficult.

**Sleep:** Getting enough sleep is vital for good migraine control. Sleep deprivation has been shown to be closely linked to the frequency and severity of migraine attacks in some patients. Most people who sleep less than six hours a day are more susceptible to headaches. However, too much sleep, meaning more than eight hours each night, may also make things worse. Try to go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day, even during your non-working days.

**Medications:** If OTC (over-the-counter) migraine drugs are taken too often or for too long, there is a risk of “medication overuse headache”.

*This leaflet is intended to provide a brief overview of aspects of this subject.*

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