

Staff Message

Migraine Handout

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To: Celia Hsi-Wen Chang, MD

Message

There are three strategies for headache management. Please keep a headache diary.

The first is avoidance of any triggers, which can include smells, being out in the bright light, skipping meals, not getting enough sleep, or various foods or food additives such as chocolate, cheeses, wines, luncheon meats, or food additives such as nitrates, MSG, or dye. If Amelia can determine if there are any specific triggers for her, I recommend that she try and avoid these triggers.

Headache triggers:

Food list:

Below are foods which may trigger migraine headaches in some people and which that person should probably avoid if an association is noted between the food and the headaches.

1. Any foods containing large amounts of monosodium glutamate (MSG), especially Chinese food, canned soups or sauces, or soup or sauce mixes
2. Caffeinated beverages, including teas, coffee, colas, and some energy drinks
3. Ripened cheeses: Gruyere, Stilton, Camembert, Cheddar, and Emmentaler (Permissible cheeses are: American, Velveeta, cream and cottage cheese)
4. Pizza
5. Herring
6. Chocolate
7. Sour cream
8. Vinegar (except white vinegar)
9. Anything fermented, pickled or marinated
10. Nuts or peanut butter
11. Hot, fresh breads, raised coffeecakes or donuts
12. Lima beans, navy beans or pea pods
13. Canned figs
14. Onions
15. Citrus fruits, no more than one orange a day
16. Avocado
17. Bananas, no more than half a banana a day
18. Pork, no more than two or three times a week
19. Chicken livers
20. Fermented sausage including hot dogs, summer sausage, salami, pepperoni, bologna
21. All alcoholic beverages or at best Sauterne, Riesling, Seagram's VO, vodka, or Cutty Sark

Other triggers:

Below are things or situations which may trigger migraine headaches in some people and which that person should probably avoid if an association is noted between the things or situations and the headaches.

1. Bright lights
2. Strong smells: perfumes or deodorants
3. Skipping meals
4. Becoming dehydrated
5. Lack of sleep
6. Cold air

The second item in headache treatment are analgesics to treat that particular headache, however, I recommend that the analgesics be taken no more than once or twice a week at most if necessary. The earlier the medication is taken in the headache episode, the better it will work so he should try to take the medication as soon as he knows that he is going to have a bad headache.

The third item in treating headaches is prophylactic medications to be taken on a daily basis to decrease the frequency and severity of the headaches. Prophylactic medications are not analgesics and will not make that particular headache better, in addition to which they often take several weeks, if not a couple of months before they are helpful in decreasing the frequency and severity of the headaches. Medications that can be used as prophylactic medications include periactin, antihypertensives such as beta blockers (propranolol) and calcium channel blockers (verapamil), tricyclic antidepressants such as nortriptyline, or seizure medications.