

## Ten things you can do today to stay well and avoid migraines

- 1. Sleep** - Too little, too much and irregular sleep can all trigger migraines. Think about how much sleep is right for you, and when would be the best times to sleep and wake. Try to keep to a regular sleeping pattern and make your sleeping environment as restful as possible. Exposure to natural light during the day, and sufficient darkness at night can help your brain fine tune your body clock and release enough sleep hormone at the right time.
- 2. Exercise** - Regular exercise can be an effective way of decreasing the number of migraine attacks. Walking, jogging, swimming, dancing, and cycling are ideal. Make sure that you have had enough to eat and drink, and are not tired before you begin, as this may bring a migraine on. Try doing 30 minutes of moderate level exercise three times a week for six weeks to see if this helps you.
- 3. Eat well and eat regularly** - The brain needs a continuous energy supply to work. Eat small regular low sugar meals and snacks throughout the day. Foods that are rich in protein and fibre are ideal. Not eating enough, skipping meals, dieting or exercising without eating can all cause a dip in energy levels and bring on a migraine. Foods that are high in sugar can initially make you feel great but are often followed by a 'crash' in blood sugar levels that leads to a migraine.
- 4. Drink water** - Water is essential for so many chemical processes within our bodies. If you are not getting enough of it, your body cannot function well and can cause migraines. To avoid this it is recommended that you drink at least eight glasses of water per day.
- 5. Cut down on the caffeine** - Too much caffeine or sudden drops in caffeine can set off a migraine. Try to cut down slowly as stopping suddenly can also be a trigger factor.

No more than 2-3 cups of tea, coffee or caffeinated drinks (like cola) a day is ideal.

6. **Limit time spent at a computer screen/VDU** - Spending long periods of time looking at a screen can lead to migraines. Take a break every hour, use an anti-glare screen and sit comfortably to help avoid the build-up of muscle tension in the head, neck and shoulders.
7. **Learn to relax** - Try not to hold on to stress; everyone needs to offload. Get plenty of fresh air and practice deep breathing, you might even want to learn some relaxation techniques.
8. **Take care with your posture** - Looking after your posture is particularly important if you do a repetitive job or a job that involves sitting for extended periods of time. Take regular breaks and make sure your working environment is as ergonomically designed as possible.
9. **Avoid sensory overload** - Many people find that over stimulation of the brain can trigger a migraine. So, it might be helpful to avoid large reflective surfaces (e.g. plain white walls) and bright, flickering, flashing or fluorescent lights. Also, to wear sunglasses and a hat in bright sunlight and stay clear of strong perfumes.
10. **Learn to say NO** - Migraines can be your body's way of saying you need to slow down and recharge. Put yourself first at least once every day.