

Migraine attack triggers

A migraine trigger is something that seems to cause or worsen a migraine attack. There are many factors that may trigger migraine attacks. But identifying them isn't always easy.



About migraine triggers

There are lots of different things that people identify as triggers for their migraine. But many people don't have any obvious triggers, and some – such as weather changes – can't be controlled.

Only a few triggers make a significant difference to your risk of getting an attack on their own. It's more likely to be a combination of several things that leads to a migraine attack. For example, you may find that you are more likely to have migraine attacks when you:

- have not eaten or skipped meals
- have not had much sleep
- are under a lot of stress.

While one of these things on its own may be less likely to lead to an attack, two or three together can increase the possibility.



Triggers vs warning signs

Sometimes, what you think is a migraine trigger may actually be an early symptom of a migraine attack. During the early prodrome stage of a migraine attack, you may get symptoms such as mood changes, neck stiffness or pain, and cravings for certain foods. You may also notice you're more sensitive to light, sound or smells.

It can be easy to mistake these warning signs for triggers. This may lead you to try and avoid something you believe to be a trigger, for no reason. If you know that something is a warning sign, it could help you to spot an attack early and get the treatment you need sooner.

It's not easy to tell whether something is a warning sign or a trigger. But keeping a migraine diary may help.



Common migraine triggers

It's important to bear in mind that triggers can be different for everyone. Some of the most commonly-reported migraine triggers include:

- hormone changes
- stress
- lack of sleep/change in sleep pattern
- skipping meals
- caffeine
- alcohol
- specific foods
- dehydration
- weather changes
- lights, noise and smells
- using a computer
- exercise.

We have more information about each of these potential triggers on our website.



Identifying and managing triggers

Keeping a migraine diary may help you to notice any patterns with your migraine attacks, including potential triggers.

It often seems to be a change in someone's usual routine that triggers a migraine attack. This can include a change in sleep routine, eating at different times, drinking more or less caffeine or even relaxing after a period of stress. Aiming to keep to a regular routine as much as possible can be helpful.



Avoiding triggers

Avoiding individual triggers can be extremely difficult, especially when it involves changing your lifestyle or routines. It can take a lot of time and effort. This can make you feel anxious and have a negative impact on other parts of your life. It's also unlikely to stop you having migraine attacks altogether.

It can be more worthwhile to focus on adjustments to your lifestyle that may help with your general health. This may have a positive impact on your migraine and may also mean you feel better able to cope with migraine attacks.

Find out more

You can read more about migraine attack triggers on our website at:

- migrainetrust.org/common-triggers

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If you have feedback on our information, please get in touch at: feedback@migrainetrust.org

Contact our Helpline on **0808 802 0066** (Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm) or through our contact form and Live Chat service at migrainetrust.org/support. You can also email us at info@migrainetrust.org.

