

# Holistic Nutrition for Headaches & Migraines

Nutrition plays a significant role in preventing migraines and headaches.. What follows are some accessible recommendations for incorporating nutritional interventions using whole-foods and supplements.

- **Magnesium** plays a role in relaxing skeletal muscles. Magnesium is found in food sources such as leafy greens, nuts and seeds. Supplement if needed with magnesium citrate, glycinate, or malate. Start with 400-600 mg per day. Epsom salt (magnesium citrate) baths can be helpful too.
- **B vitamins** are necessary to support nerve structure and function and help normalize vascular function. Without adequate B-vitamins, mood imbalance and brain fog may occur. Riboflavin (aka Vitamin B-2) has been studied for its role in decreasing migraine frequency and severity. B vitamins are water soluble, so they are lost through perspiration and urination. Food sources include: leafy greens, nuts and seeds, beef liver, and eggs. People who follow a vegan or vegetarian diet may want to take a supplement. I recommend [Emerson Ecologics](#) brand.
- **Essential Fatty Acids** (EFAs) support brain health and have been studied for their role in preventing migraine symptoms. Good food sources include cold-water fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines), flax seeds, chia seeds, walnuts, meat and dairy products from grass-fed animals. Supplement with cod liver oil or flaxseed oil if desired.
- **Flavonoid-rich foods** reduce inflammation overall and support the cardiovascular system's structure and function. Good food sources include berries, chocolate, and green tea.
- **Dehydration** can occur when the body loses more water and electrolytes than it takes in. Many people do not consume enough water. Dehydration is more common in hot weather, when someone is vomiting or has diarrhea, after consuming alcohol or stimulants such as caffeine, and/or with vigorous physical activity. **Switchel** and electrolyte-rich drinks can help prevent and resolve dehydration. Many [switchel variations](#) exist, and additional fruit juice or herbs can be added to suit preferences.
- **Additional recommendations:** Consider reducing sugar, refined carbohydrates, chemical preservatives, caffeine, and alcohol. Some people are especially sensitive to monosodium glutamate (MSG), sulfites, and [tyramine-rich foods](#) as well. A [low-glycemic diet](#) may be beneficial for balancing blood sugar too.



## Additional Resources & Research

### Magnesium

- [Chiu HY, Yeh TH, Huang YC, Chen PY. Effects of Intravenous and Oral Magnesium on Reducing Migraine: A Meta-analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials. Pain Physician. 2016 Jan;19\(1\):E97-112. PMID: 26752497.](#)
- [Gröber U, Schmidt J, Kisters K. Magnesium in Prevention and Therapy. Nutrients. 2015 Sep 23;7\(9\):8199-226. doi: 10.3390/nu7095388. PMID: 26404370; PMCID: PMC4586582.](#)
- [Kirkland AE, Sarlo GL, Holton KF. The Role of Magnesium in Neurological Disorders. Nutrients. 2018 Jun 6;10\(6\):730. doi: 10.3390/nu10060730. PMID: 29882776; PMCID: PMC6024559.](#)

### B Vitamins

- [Marashly ET, Bohlega SA. Riboflavin Has Neuroprotective Potential: Focus on Parkinson's Disease and Migraine. Front Neurol. 2017 Jul 20;8:333. doi: 10.3389/fneur.2017.00333. PMID: 28775706; PMCID: PMC5517396.](#)
- [Shaik MM, Gan SH. Vitamin supplementation as possible prophylactic treatment against migraine with aura and menstrual migraine. Biomed Res Int. 2015;2015:469529. doi: 10.1155/2015/469529. Epub 2015 Feb 28. PMID: 25815319; PMCID: PMC4359851.](#)
- [Gaul C, Diener HC, Danesch U; Migravent® Study Group. Improvement of migraine symptoms with a proprietary supplement containing riboflavin, magnesium and Q10: a randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind, multicenter trial. J Headache Pain. 2015;16:516. doi: 10.1186/s10194-015-0516-6. Epub 2015 Apr 3. PMID: 25916335; PMCID: PMC4393401.](#)
- [Sherwood M, Goldman RD. Effectiveness of riboflavin in pediatric migraine prevention. Can Fam Physician. 2014 Mar;60\(3\):244-6. PMID: 24627379; PMCID: PMC3952759.](#)

### Essential Fatty Acids

- [Soveyd, N., Abdolahi, M., Bitarafan, S., Tafakhori, A., Sarraf, P., Togha, M., Okhovat, A. A., Hatami, M., Sedighyan, M., Djalali, M., & Mohammadzadeh Honarvar, N. \(2017\). Molecular mechanisms of omega-3 fatty acids in the migraine headache. Iranian journal of neurology, 16\(4\), 210-217.](#)
- [Mann JD, Faurot KR, MacIntosh B, Palsson OS, Suchindran CM, Gaylord SA, Lynch C, Johnston A, Maiden K, Barrow DA, Hibbeln JR, Ramsden CE. A sixteen-week three-armed, randomized, controlled trial investigating clinical and biochemical effects of targeted alterations in dietary linoleic acid and n-3](#)



[EPA+DHA in adults with episodic migraine: Study protocol. Prostaglandins Leukot Essent Fatty Acids. 2018 Jan;128:41-52.](#)

### **Flavonoid-rich Foods**

- [Goschorska, M., Gutowska, I., Baranowska-Bosiacka, I., Barczak, K., & Chlubek, D. \(2020\). The Use of Antioxidants in the Treatment of Migraine. Antioxidants \(Basel, Switzerland\), 9\(2\), 116. <https://doi.org/10.3390/antiox9020116>](#)
- [Basu P, Basu A. In Vitro and In Vivo Effects of Flavonoids on Peripheral Neuropathic Pain. Molecules. 2020 Mar 5;25\(5\):1171. doi: 10.3390/molecules25051171. PMID: 32150953; PMCID: PMC7179245.](#)

### **Identifying Dietary Migraine Triggers**

- [Nowaczewska M, Wiciński M, Kaźmierczak W, Kaźmierczak H. To Eat or Not to Eat: A Review of the Relationship between Chocolate and Migraines. Nutrients. 2020 Feb 26;12\(3\):608. doi: 10.3390/nu12030608. PMID: 32110888; PMCID: PMC7146545.](#)
- [10 Foods That Trigger Migraines](#)
- [Low-Tyramine Diet for Migraine Disease](#)

