





6 Strategies to Control and Prevent Migraines

Research shows that it is sometimes possible to avoid migraines or control them when they start. This tip sheet gives you a list of ways to do this.

After looking at this list, you might want to check the box next to things to try. Because your migraines are different from everyone else's, it might take some time to create a plan that works for you.

- Counseling to reduce stress and behaviors that may cause migraine.** This is called cognitive-behavioral therapy, or CBT. A CBT counselor can help you identify stress, unhealthy habits, and other things that could trigger migraines. A counselor can also help you change your thoughts or behavior so you have fewer migraines. Talking with a counselor can help you solve problems and lower stress. This could also mean fewer migraines. To find a qualified CBT therapist, visit www.abct.org and click on "Find a CBT Therapist" at the right side of the page. 
- Biofeedback.** You can learn this technique from a doctor or other healthcare provider. You go to the office for regular sessions. Each session takes about an hour. You may learn to relax your muscles with small pieces of equipment attached to them to measure tension. Reducing tension lowers your chances of having a migraine. Or you may learn to raise your body temperature, such as in your hands. This can also reduce body responses that lead to migraines.
- Relaxation.** Learning specific ways to relax can help prevent or ease migraines. Relaxation exercises and stress-management techniques can help. A counselor or physical therapist can teach you specific ways to relax, such as the "progressive muscle relaxation" technique. Or you can use a book, video, or audio program. Deep breathing, prayer, meditation, and yoga are examples of other relaxation techniques. These techniques work best when you practice them often because the benefits grow with time.
- Living a healthy lifestyle.** Sleeping and eating on a regular schedule, avoiding processed and "junk" foods, exercising regularly, not smoking, and avoiding too much caffeine and alcohol can prevent or control migraines. Drinking plenty of water, keeping a headache diary to learn your triggers, and avoiding any known triggers can also help. 
- Joining a support group for people with migraines.** Talking to other people who have migraines can help lower stress and teach you new ways to cope.
- Acupuncture treatment.** Acupuncture involves placing fine needles into specific points of the body to increase blood flow, relax the nervous system, increase the release of endorphins (chemicals that make the body feel good), and decrease muscle tension. For the treatment of migraines, needles are usually inserted on the forearms and lower legs.

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