

Banish that HEADACHE!

Identify the cause of that annoying pain and see it off for good with these expert insights

1 DEHYDRATION

"The easiest way to help with your headaches is to find out if there is a pattern to them. I often recommend that people keep a food diary," says Shona Wilkinson, nutritionist at SuperfoodUK.com. "The first thing you should always check is your fluid intake. Are you getting enough water? Dehydration is one of the main causes of headaches so check this first. Herbal teas can count towards your water intake so include these as well."

2 FOOD INTOLERANCE

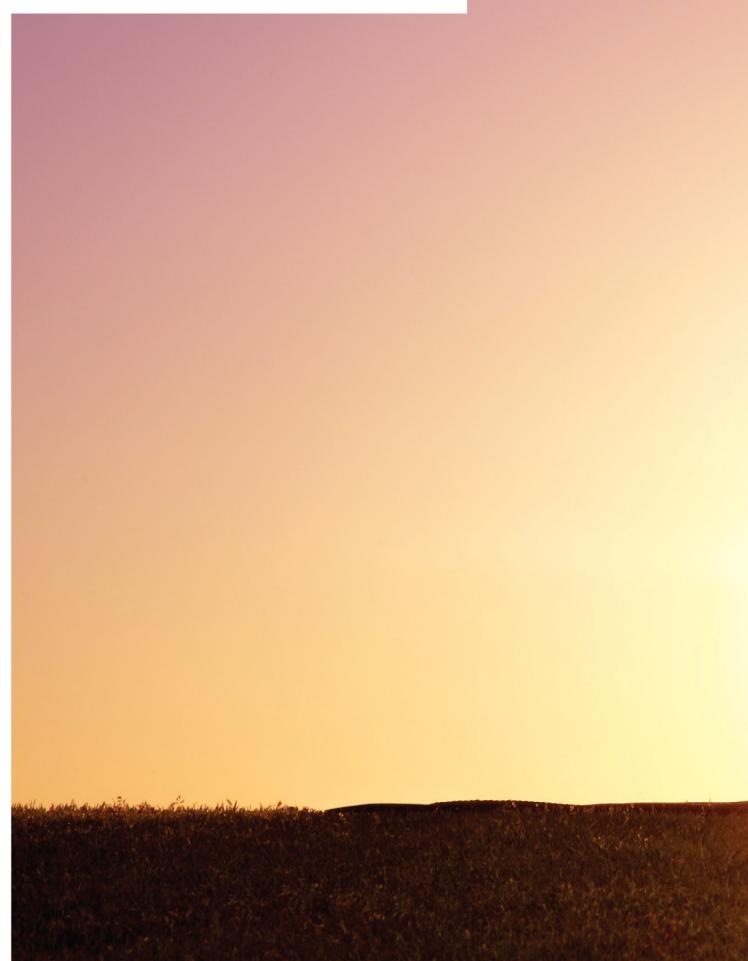
"Keep a diary for about two weeks then go back through and see if there is any pattern," says Shona. "Make notes in the diary as well about things such as exercise, digestive disturbances, sleeping patterns, eating times and liquid intake. It may be that when looking back, you can see a pattern emerging.

"You may uncover food intolerances this way, or you can have a blood test done to check. Have a look for any digestive disorders during the weeks and make a note of these – they could be a trigger for your headaches."

3 BLOOD SUGAR ISSUES

"It is also important to note the timing of your food," says Shona. "It is common for people to develop headaches when they have poor blood sugar balance. This can happen if you leave too long between meals or are eating the wrong types of food. Watch out for any sugary items which can cause havoc with blood sugar balance and result in a headache. Sugary foods cause a rapid release of glucose into the bloodstream, but this is followed by an even faster fall in blood sugar approximately an hour later. Both these highs and lows can cause or exacerbate a headache."

"Avoid the hidden sugar in foods as well, such as fizzy drinks, ready meals, sauces and so on. Again a way to check for this is through your food diary. Making sure you have a slow and steady blood sugar level will boost overall health as well as help towards reducing your headaches. To help blood sugar levels stay consistent, I also recommend making sure you have protein with every meal. This helps reduce the rate sugar enters into the bloodstream."



"If you feel that your headaches may be caused by blood sugar problems, it is important not to leave too long between meals. Careful snacking is the key – choose protein or vegetables. Remember how important your diet is to your health and be very conscious of what you eat at all times."

4 TENSION

"Most of us have experienced a tension-type headache (TTH) – that dull, band-like pressure that affects both sides of the head, sometimes accompanied by tight neck and shoulder muscles and a feeling of pressure behind the eyes," says Paul Battersby, president of the Federation of Holistic Therapists. "The exact cause of TTHs still isn't clear, but commonly reported triggers include anxiety, stress,

Try this!



"Turmeric boosts blood flow, encouraging more oxygen to the brain" says Katie Pande, herbal adviser at Pukka Herbs. "It also encourages a balanced inflammation response throughout the body, soothing excess tension and frazzled nerves." For headaches and migraines try Pukka's organic turmeric range including Turmeric Gold tea



depression, poor posture, lack of sleep and physical exhaustion.

To help manage mild TTHs, you may find some of the following techniques useful:

"Massage, as well as being very relaxing, has the added benefit of actually working tight muscles, so a back massage or an Indian head massage – both of which focus on the neck and shoulder area – are ideal for headaches.

"Many people find other complementary therapies helpful too, such as reflexology, aromatherapy and acupuncture. Regular exercise is also recommended for headache sufferers.

"A good night's sleep is important but be careful not to get too much, or you may suffer a 'weekend headache', which can be triggered by a change in routine, including too much sleep."

5 POSTURE

"Poor posture can cause tension in the back, neck and shoulders and be linked to headaches in some people, with pain occurring at the base of the skull," says Paul. "Try to avoid sitting or standing in one position for a long time, move around at regular intervals, and gently rotate any affected joints.

"A full assessment by a sports massage therapist or Alexander technique practitioner could also help you to identify and correct any postural problems."

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