

This Element in Foods Can Trigger Migraines

Nearly 28 million Americans suffer from migraines. Usually, a migraine involves intense, throbbing pain on one side of a person's head, but in as many as 40 percent of people who suffer migraines, the pain occurs on both sides of the person's head.

A migraine may be accompanied by nausea, vomiting and sensitivity to both sound and light. If a migraine is not treated, a person can suffer from symptoms for up to three days.

For individuals who suffer from headaches and migraines, it may be surprising to discover that some foods may be behind the onset of the painful experience. Some individuals may actually have a level of sensitivity to tyramine: An amino acid that originates from the breakdown of aging proteins from food.

The amino acid may increase blood pressure and, in turn, trigger a headache in tyramine-sensitive individuals. If you suspect you have a sensitivity to tyramine, you should begin tracking the foods you consume by keeping a detailed food diary.

Since tyramine originates with aged foods, if you find you are sensitive to the amino acid, you will want to avoid certain beverages and foods. Generally, the longer the food is aged, the greater the amount of tyramine one will find in the food or beverage.

Some **beers, red wine, soy sauce, sauerkraut** and **citrus fruits** may trigger a headache in tyramine-sensitive people. Additionally, foods like aged cheese and cured or smoked meats may be behind the onset of headaches. Tyramine content levels

in aged cheese will vary greatly and levels are dependent on the different processes, fermentation practices, aging and degradation of the cheese product.

Cheeses that typically contain high levels of tyramine include processed, Swiss, Parmesan, Muenster, Mozzarella, Gorgonzola, Feta, Stilton, Cheddar, Brie and Blue cheeses. Additional foods containing significant amounts of tyramine include nuts, canned soups, raisins, avocados, pickles, olives, onions, pinto beans, lima beans, garbanzo beans, broad beans and fava beans.

It is also important to note that tyramine-rich foods may interact with certain medications, particularly certain types of antidepressants called Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs). If you are taking such medications, you should discuss your dietary intake with your physician.

In addition to tyramine-rich foods, alcoholic beverages can trigger headaches as well. When the body metabolizes alcohol it creates impurities in the body. The impurities are byproducts that trigger headaches. The main culprits that serve as headache triggers are champagne, whiskey, beer and red wine.

Foods containing tyramine are only one source of foods responsible for triggering headaches. Some foods containing additives like nitrates can trigger headaches in certain people. The consumption of cold foods or even not eating enough food can lead to headaches.

Meanwhile, if you consume caffeine and you suddenly stop doing so, you will experience a headache from the caffeine withdrawal. By maintaining a diary, you can identify the foods triggering your headaches so you can avoid them and thwart the headaches entirely. You can also isolate a single food at a time to see if it is a headache trigger.

If it is, you can avoid it in the future, and if it is not,

you can keep it on your menu for acceptable food intake.

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