SPECTRUM HEALTH

Diet and Migraine

There is strong evidence to suggest that healthy eating patterns and maintaining a healthy weight are associated with positive health outcomes. This includes, but is not limited to, reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes, obesity, improvement in bone health, and **decreasing severity and/or frequency of migraine attacks**. Body mass index above 30, skipping meals, low blood sugar and increased sodium levels (processed foods) are all associated with increased risk for migraine frequency and severity.

What Should I Be Eating?

1. Vegetables

Vegetables are a great option and necessary because they are very nutrient dense with potassium, fiber, folic acid, vitamin A and vitamin C. They are also naturally low in fat and calories. Consuming vegetables daily can decrease your risk of developing heart disease, and a healthier weight can decrease headaches as well. Raw, cooked, fresh, canned or frozen are all great options!

Tips: If choosing canned vegetables, look for options with reduced or no added salt. Buy vegetables that are easy to prepare, such as prewashed bags of salad greens and packages of veggies such as baby carrots or celery for easy snacks! Try to make half of your plate a mixture of fruit and veggies for every meal and don't forget to mix it up!

Goal: 2.5 cups per day and variation of type of veggie

2. Fruits

Fruits are a great option and necessary because they are packed full of nutrients such as fiber, potassium, folic acid and vitamin C, and they are also naturally low in fat, sodium and calories. Consuming fruits daily can decrease your risk of developing heart disease, and lower levels of sodium and a healthy weight can decrease headaches as well. Fresh, frozen, dried or canned fruits are all great options!

Tips: If choosing canned fruits, look for options with reduced or no added salt [or] sugar. If choosing juice, be sure it is 100 percent juice. When choosing canned fruits, select options in 100 percent fruit juice or water instead of syrup. Try to make half of your plate a mixture of fruit and veggies for every meal and don't forget to mix it up! When you buy fresh fruit at the store, cut it up as soon as you get home for easy access later in the week, or buy precut packages of fruit for even better convenience!

Goal: 2 cups per day

References

USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. Build a Healthy Eating Style. (July 19, 2018) Retrieved from: https://www.choosemyplate.gov/MyPlate

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Healthy Eating for a Healthy Weight (September 8, 2016) Retrieved from: https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/index.html

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2015 – 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 8th Edition. December 2015. Retrieved from: https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/.

What Should I Be Eating?, Continued

3. Grains

Grains are stored in your body as glucose, which provides your body with energy. Grains are nutrient rich in fiber, B vitamins, and minerals such as iron and magnesium. You should make your grains whole-wheat flour, cracked wheat, oatmeal, whole cornmeal or brown rice. Consuming whole grains can help with developing a healthy weight, which can help to decrease migraines.

Tips: When reading the nutrition label, the first ingredient should read "whole grain" or should be second to water. Try to make at least half of your grains "whole grains" every day.

Goal: 6 ounces per day

4. Dairy

Dairy is nutrient rich in potassium, vitamin D and protein. Consuming healthy dairy products can lead to improved bone health and improved cardiovascular health, and choosing lower-fat options can lead to a healthy weight. Aim to consume your dairy from the following sources: fat-free or low-fat (1 percent) milk, yogurt, cheese, and soy milk.

Tips: Try to avoid dairy options that are high in saturated fats and cholesterol. If you do not currently drink fat-free milk or dairy products, try to make the change gradually. For example, if you drink vitamin D milk, go to 2 percent for a while, then 1 percent and then finally fat-free milk. Make your yogurt choices low fat or fat free. Make your cheeses low fat. If you drink specialty coffee, ask for it to be made with fat-free milk.

Goal: 3 cups per day

5. Proteins

Protein provides your body with energy it needs. Proteins are nutrient rich in: B vitamins, zinc, copper, vitamins D and E, phosphorus, and iron.

Tips: When choosing meats, be sure to always choose lean meats. Lean beef includes round steaks and roasts, top sirloin, and chuck shoulder. Lean pork options include pork loin, tenderloin and ham. When choosing beef, ensure it is at least 92 percent lean. Lean poultry includes boneless and skinless chicken breasts and turkey cutlets. Try to grill or bake your food instead of frying! When reading the nutrition label, avoid options that have any trans fat and ensure it has low levels of cholesterol and sodium. When consuming nuts, choose options that are unsalted.

Goal: 5.5 ounces of protein per day and 8 ounces of seafood per week.

Other Important Pieces of Healthy Eating Habits

Fats

Fat provides our body with energy via essential fatty acids. We need this because our bodies are unable to make essential fatty acids on their own. Essential fatty acids help our bodies to absorb fat-soluble vitamins properly. Some fats have more benefits than others. The "good fats" that you want to consume are called polyunsaturated fats. These are commonly found in fish. This type of fat can help reduce the risk of getting heart disease. The "bad fats" are called saturated fats and trans fats. These are commonly found in butter and most processed food. This type of fat can raise your cholesterol level, and increase the likelihood of getting heart disease. Oils are a type of fat and there are many types of oils. Healthy oils you want to consume include: canola, corn, olive, peanut, safflower, soybean and sunflower. You can find these in nuts, seeds, seafood, olives and avocados.

Water

Dehydration is a common migraine trigger; therefore, by staying hydrated you can help prevent triggering a migraine. Drinking enough water can also help to manage body weight and reduce calories when you substitute it for drinks like soda. The recommended daily water intake for women is 2.5 liters (84.5 ounces) and for men is 3.5 liters (101.4 ounces).

Caffeine

Caffeine is a very common trigger for headache. Increased consumption of caffeine can lead to rebound headaches and worsened sleep. This can then lead to multiple factors contributing to headaches. It is recommended to limit your caffeine intake to one to two caffeinated drinks per day.

Snacking

In the management of headache, it is recommended to snack throughout the day, because entering a low blood sugar state (hypoglycemia) can trigger a migraine. A good way to achieve this without increasing the amount of calories you consume daily is to eat six small meals per day instead of three larger meals.

Making the Change

Making the changes discussed above to achieve healthy eating patterns takes a lot of hard work and dedication. It is not a diet that you can do for a few weeks. It is creating new habits and implementing them into your lifestyle long term. Don't try to make every desired change overnight. Instead, start with making small changes, and over time add more and more small changes until you have reached your goals! This is not an easy task, but it is definitely achievable if you put your mind to it! To be successful, surround yourself with people who are making the same changes or support the changes you are making.