

Migraine Diet

The list of foods, beverages, and additives thought to trigger or exacerbate migraine symptoms in some people includes:

- Cheese
- Chocolate
- Citrus fruits
- Hot dogs
- Monosodium glutamate
- Aspartame
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG) is sometimes added as a flavor enhancer in [Chinese restaurants](#). It is also found in commercial soups, soy sauce, salad dressings, frozen dinners, soup mix, croutons, stuffing, and some chips. It can be disguised on food labels as sodium caseinate, hydrolyzed proteins, or autolyzed yeast.
- Fatty foods
- Ice cream
- Caffeine withdrawal
- Alcoholic drinks, especially red wine and beer

Published surveys have found that the most commonly reported food triggers are cheese, chocolate, alcohol, bananas, and citrus fruit. In a survey of 429 people with migraine, 16.5% reported migraines triggered by cheese or chocolate, 28.4% reported sensitivity to all alcoholic drinks, 11.8% were sensitive to red but not white wine, and 28% were sensitive to beer.

According to the same article, certain chemicals in foods called amines, such as tyramine, phenylethylamine, and histamine are often the culprits. Tyramine is found in higher concentrations in foods that have been fermented, such as:

- Aged or blue cheese
- Yogurt
- Smoked, cured or pickled meat or fish
- Red wine or beer
- Soy sauce, miso, tempeh

Foods containing phenylethylamine include:

- Cheesecake
- Yellow cheeses
- Chocolate
- Citrus fruit
- Chocolate
- Cocoa
- Berry pie filling or canned berries
- Red wine

Foods containing histamine include:

- Banana
- Beef, pork
- Beer
- Cheese, especially yellow ripened

- Chicken liver
- Egg Plant
- Fish, shellfish
- Processed meat, such as salami
- Sauerkraut
- Tempeh, tofu, miso, tamari
- Spinach
- Strawberry
- Tomato, tomato sauce, tomato paste
- Wine
- Yeast and foods containing yeast
- Pineapple
- Citrus fruit
- Chocolate

Should I Follow a Migraine Diet?

Diet isn't a treatment for migraine, but for some people, avoiding certain foods may help prevent attacks.

Simultaneously eliminating all possible trigger foods is generally not recommended because of the sheer number of potential triggers. Most people would find the diet too restrictive and difficult to adhere to.

Instead, keeping a diet diary may help to identify any food triggers. The diet diary should list all foods eaten every day, with approximate times. The appearance of any symptoms should be noted. If food triggers are found, selectively avoiding only those foods may help.

Skipping meals can be a trigger for some people, so eating regular, wellbalanced meals is often advise

MIGRAINE HEADACHE DIET

	Green Light = "OK to eat"	Yellow Light = Eat Sparingly	Red Light = Avoid
Beverages	Caffeine free carbonated beverages club soda sparkling waters decaffeinated coffee fruit juices	Limit alcoholic beverages (wine, vodka, scotch) to 1 serving caffeinated beverages to no more than 2 servings per day	All alcohol beverages not on yellow list
Meat fish poultry and eggs	freshly purchased and prepared meats, fish and poultry eggs tuna and tuna salad with allowed ingredients	Bacon sausage hot dogs corned beef ham any luncheon meats with nitrates added, meat with tenderizer (MSG) caviar	Products that are aged dried fermented smokes and or pickled such as pepperoni, salami liver wurst non fresh meat or liver pickled herring
Dairy	Milk Processed cheese	Parmesan or Romano cheese as a garnish or minor ingredient yogurt buttermilk sour cream	Aged Cheese
Breads Pasta Cereal	Commercially prepared yeast products ,products leavened with baking powder, all hot and dry cereals all pasta	Homemade yeast breads and coffee cake sourdough breads	Any with restricted ingredients
Vegetables	Any vegetables not on red light list	raw onion	fava or broad beans sauerkraut fermented soy products such as miso pickles
Fruits	All fruits not on yellow list	Limit Intake of each of the following to 1/2 cup per day: citrus fruits, avocados, bananas, figs, rasins, papaya, passion fruit, red plums	
Nuts and seeds			All nuts and seeds eg peanuts peanut butter pumpkin seeds sesame seeds walnuts pecans
Soups	Soups made from allowed ingredients homemade broths	Canned soups that contain yeast meat extracts and or MSG	
Desserts Sweets	Any made with allowed foods and ingredients	Chocolate-based products	Mincemeat Pies
Food Ingredients	Any not listed in the red light section		MSG in large amounts nitrates (processed meats) , yeast, yeast extracts, brewers yeast, meat extracts meat tenderizers (pappain bromelin) seasoned salts that contain MSG soy sauce teriyaki sauce
Fats Oils and Misc Items	All cooking oils and fats, white vinegar, commercial salad dressing with allowed ingredients in small amounts, all spices not listed on red light list	Fermented vinegars (wine, apple, etc)	Mixed dishes made with restricted ingredients, Example macaroni and cheese beef stroganoff cheese blintzes oriental foods pizza frozen dinners (read labels to check for restricted ingredients)

Low Tyramine Headache Diet*

Tyramine is produced in foods from the natural breakdown of the amino acid tyrosine. Tyramine is not added to foods. Tyramine levels increase in foods when they are aged, fermented, stored for long periods of time, or are not fresh

Food Group	Allowed	Use With Caution	Avoid
Meat, Fish, Poultry, Eggs	Freshly purchased and prepared meats, fish, and poultry Eggs Tuna fish, tuna salad (with allowed ingredients)	Bacon*, sausage*, hot dogs*, corned beef*, bologna*, ham*, any luncheon meats with nitrates or nitrites added. Meats with tenderizer added caviar	Aged, dried, fermented, salted, smoked, or pickled products. Pepperoni, salami, and liverwurst. Non-fresh meat or liver, pickled herring
Dairy	Milk: whole, 2% or skim Cheese: American, cottage, farmer, ricotta, cream cheese, Velveeta, low-fat processed	Yogurt, buttermilk, sour cream: ½ cup per day Parmesan* or Romano* as a garnish (2 tsp.) or minor ingredient	Aged cheese: blue, brick, brie cheddar, Swiss, Roquefort, stilton, mozzarella, provolone, emmentaler, etc.
Breads, Cereals, Pasta	Commercially prepared yeast Product leavened with baking powder: biscuits, pancakes, coffee cakes, etc. All cooked and dry cereals All pasta: spaghetti, rotini ravioli, (w/allowed ingredients), macaroni, and egg noodles	Homemade yeast leavened breads and coffee cakes Sourdough breads	Any with a restricted ingredient
Vegetables	Asparagus, string beans, beets, carrots, spinach, pumpkin, tomatoes, squash, zucchini, broccoli, potatoes, onions cooked in food, Chinese pea pods, navy beans, soy beans, any not on restricted list	Raw onion	Snow peas, fava or broad beans, sauerkraut, pickles and olives Fermented soy products like miso, soy sauce, and teriyaki sauce
Fruits	Apple, applesauce, cherries, apricots, peaches, any not on restricted list	Limit intake to ½ cup per day from each group: Citrus: orange, grapefruit, tangerine, pineapple, lemon and lime Avocados, banana, figs*, raisins*, dried fruit*, papaya, passion fruit, and red plums	
Nuts and Seeds			All nuts: peanuts, peanut butter, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, walnuts, pecans

Food Group	Allowed	Use With Caution	Avoid
Soups	Soups made from allowed ingredients, homemade broths	Canned soups with autolyzed or hydrolyzed yeast*, meat extracts*, or monosodium glutamate*(MSG)	
Beverages	Decaffeinated coffee, fruit juices, club soda, caffeine-free carbonated beverages	Limited caffeinated beverages to no more than 2 servings per day: Coffee and tea: 1 cup = 1 serving carbonated beverages and hot cocoa or chocolate milk: 12oz = 1 serving Limit alcoholic beverages to one serving: 4oz Riesling wine, 1.5oz vodka or scotch per day = 1 serving per day (May need to omit if on MAOI)	Alcoholic beverages: Chianti, sherry, burgundy, vermouth, ale, beer, and non-alcoholic fermented beverages. All others not specified in caution column
Desserts & Sweets	Any made with allowed foods and ingredients: sugar, jelly, jam, honey, hard candies, cakes, cookies	Chocolate based products: ice cream (1 cup), pudding (1 cup), cookies (1 average size), cakes (3" cube), and chocolate candies (1/2oz). (All count as one serving of caffeinated beverage)	Mincemeat pie
Ingredients Listed on Food Labels	Any not listed in the restricted section		MSG* (in large amounts), nitrates and nitrites (found mainly in processed meats), yeast, yeast extracts, brewers yeast, hydrolyzed or autolyzed yeast, meat extracts, meat tenderizers (papain, bromelin) seasoned salt (containing MSG), soy sauce, teriyaki sauce
Fats, Oils, and Miscellaneous	All cooking oils and fats White vinegar Commercial salad dressing with allowed ingredients All spices not listed in restricted ingredients	Wine, apple, or other fermented vinegars*	

Caffeine Content of Selected Beverages

Carbonated beverages 12oz=30–50mg (Regular and sugar-free)

Coffee 6oz=103mg

Decaffeinated coffee 6oz=2mg

Tea 6oz=31-36mg (Instant and 3-minute brew)

General Guidelines

- Each day eat three meals with a snack at night or six small meals spread throughout the day.
- Avoid eating high sugar foods on an empty stomach, when excessively hungry, or in place of a meal.
- All food, especially high protein foods, should be prepared and eaten fresh. Be cautious of leftovers held for more than one or two days at refrigerator temperature. Freeze leftovers that you want to store for more than 2 or 3 days.
- Cigarette and cigar smoke contain a multitude of chemicals that will trigger or aggravate your headache. If you smoke, make quitting a high priority. Enter a smoking cessation program.
- The foods listed in the “CAUTION” column have smaller amounts of Tyramine or other vasoactive compounds. Foods with an * may contain small amounts of Tyramine. Other foods in the “USE WITH CAUTION” column do not contain Tyramine but are potential headache “triggers”. If you are taking an MAO inhibitor (Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitor) you should test the use of restricted foods in limited amounts.
- Each person may have different sensitivities to certain level of Tyramine or other vasoactive compounds in foods. If you are not on an MAO inhibitor, you should test the use of restricted foods in limited amounts.
- Adapted from the Columbus Hospital & Diamond Headache Clinic Low Tyramine Headache Diet.