



## Migraine Trigger Guide:

# Hunger

### Explanation

Getting a migraine when you're hungry, skipping or missing meals is a common occurrence.

If we don't eat enough of the calories that our bodies need, then our blood-glucose level drops. If it drops too low it can lead to headache or migraine.

### Trigger causes

Blood glucose levels can fall when you:

- skip meals
- fast
- diet
- exercise without sufficient food

### How do you know if this is an issue?

Fasting, eating high-sugar foods, dieting too rigorously, and skipping meals can all trigger, or make people more likely to have a headache or migraine.

Even delayed or irregular meals can make a difference.

Headaches produced from going without food can be severe and accompanied by mild nausea. There is also a similarity between some of the symptoms of missing a meal and the early warning signs (premonitory) of a migraine attack, such as: yawning, pallor, sweating, headache, a craving for sweet things and mood changes.

### Options to try

If your attacks appear to be triggered or exacerbated by low blood-glucose levels, you may be able to keep them under control by paying close attention to your diet.



Small, frequent, low-sugar meals are ideal. Make sure you don't miss breakfast or skip meals, and if you usually have sandwiches for lunch try having proper meals instead. If you have lunch early, have an afternoon snack so you don't get hungry.

If you have a hypoglycemic headache that starts when you wake up, it may be prevented by having a high fiber snack or meal before bed. High-fiber helps prolong the glyceemic effect.

Consider improving the quality of your food by eating a balanced diet with more fresh fruit and vegetables and less processed foods, cakes, biscuits, ice cream and anything which causes you to consume large amounts of sugar over a short period of time.

It may also help to add more protein to your diet, and to have less flavored or pre-cooked foods.

The naturally-occurring sugars in unrefined food are digested more slowly than those in refined food, which means that glucose is released into the bloodstream more consistently. This is less likely to stimulate the overproduction of insulin that can lead to hypoglycemia.

If you are dieting, plan to lose a smaller amount of weight over a longer period of time. This is often a better and more sustainable way to diet.

Stress and alcohol can interfere with your metabolism, so it is important to make time for relaxation and sleep. Be careful of how much alcohol and caffeine you consume. Consider gradually cutting down on caffeinated tea, coffee, chocolate, and other caffeine-containing products (e.g. Red Bull, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, and Dr. Pepper).

These small adjustments can make a real difference to the frequency and severity of your attacks if they are triggered by hypoglycemia or hunger.

Migraine is often caused by several different factors, and people often require a combination of treatments which address each factor to effectively manage their condition.

### Watch-outs

Eating a high-sugar meal can cause 'reactive hypoglycemia'. The sudden rise in blood-glucose from the sugary food causes an overproduction of insulin, which in turn makes the blood-glucose levels fall too low.