

Migraines: Simple steps to head off the pain

Dr TAREQ SALAHUDDIN

Medication is a proven way to treat — and prevent — migraines. But medication is only part of the story. It is also important to take good care of yourself. The same lifestyle choices that promote good health can reduce the frequency and severity of your migraines. In fact, combining lifestyle measures with medication is often the most effective way to handle migraines.

Seek a calm environment

At the first sign of a migraine, retreat from your usual activities if possible.

•**Turn out the lights.** Migraines often increase sensitivity to light and sound. Relax in a dark, quiet room. Sleep if you can.

•**Try temperature therapy.** Apply hot or cold compresses to your head or neck. Ice packs have a numbing effect, which may dull the sensation of pain. Hot packs and heating pads can relax tense muscles. Warm showers or baths may have a similar effect.

•**Massage painful areas.** Apply gentle pressure to your scalp or temples. Alleviate muscle tension with a shoulder or neck massage.

•**Drink a caffeinated beverage.** In small amounts, caffeine

can enhance the pain-reducing effects of acetaminophen and aspirin. Be careful, however. Drinking too much caffeine too often can lead to withdrawal headaches later on.

Sleepwell

Migraines may keep you from falling asleep or wake you up at night. Likewise, migraines are often triggered by a poor night's sleep. Here is help encouraging sound sleep.

•**Establish regular sleep hours.** Wake up and go to bed at the same time every day — even on weekends. If you nap during the day, keep it short. Naps longer than one hour may interfere with nighttime sleep.

•**Unwind at the end of the day.** Anything that helps you relax can promote better sleep. Listen to soothing music, soak in a warm bath or read a favorite book. But watch what you eat and drink before bedtime. Heavy meals, caffeine, nicotine and alcohol can interfere with sleep.

•**Minimise distractions.** Save your bedroom for sleep and intimacy. Don't watch television or take work materials to bed. Close your bedroom door. Use a fan to muffle distracting noises.

•**Don't try to sleep.** The harder you try to sleep, the more aware you will feel. If you can not fall

asleep, read or do another quiet activity until you become drowsy.

•**Check your medications.** Medications that contain caffeine or other stimulants — including some medications to treat migraines — may interfere with sleep.

Eat wisely

Your eating habits can influence your migraines. Consider the basics:

•**Be consistent.** Eat at about the same time every day.

•**Don't skip meals.** Breakfast is especially important.

•**Avoid foods that trigger migraines.** If you suspect that a certain food — such as aged cheese, avocados or raisins — is triggering your migraines, eliminate it from your diet to see what happens.

Exercise regularly

During physical activity, your body releases certain chemicals that block pain signals to your brain. These chemicals also help alleviate anxiety and depression — conditions that can make migraines worse. If your doctor agrees, choose any exercise you enjoy. Walking, swimming and cycling are often good choices. But it is important to start slowly. Exercising too vigorously can trigger migraines.

Manage stress

Stress and migraines often go hand in hand. You cannot avoid daily stress, but you can keep it under control — which can help you prevent migraines.

•**Simplify your life.** Rather than looking for ways to squeeze more activities or chores into the day, find a way to leave some things out.

•**Manage your time wisely.** Update your to-do list every day — both at work and at home. Delegate what you can, and break large projects into manageable chunks.

•**Take a break.** If you feel overwhelmed, a few slow stretches or

a quick walk may renew your energy for the task at hand.

•**Adjust your attitude.** Stay positive. If you find yourself thinking, "This cannot be done," switch gears. Think instead, "This will be tough. But I can make it work."

•**Let go.** Don't worry about things you cannot control.

•**Relax.** Deep breathing from your diaphragm can help you relax. Try to do 20 minutes of deep breathing every day. It may also help to consciously relax your muscles, one group at a time. When you are done, sit quietly for a minute or two.

Keep a migraine diary

A diary may help you determine what triggers your migraines. Note when your migraines start, what you were doing at the time, how long they last and what, if anything, provides relief. Eventually you may be able to prevent migraines by changing patterns in your daily life.

Strive for balance

Living with migraines is a daily challenge. But making healthy lifestyle choices can help. Ask your friends and loved ones for support. If you are feeling anxious or depressed, consider joining a support group or seeking counseling. Believe in your ability to take control of the pain.



High blood pressure lifestyle

If you have been diagnosed with high blood pressure (a systolic pressure of 140 or above or a diastolic pressure of 90 or above) or with prehypertension (a systolic pressure between 120 and 139 or a diastolic pressure between 80 and 89), you might be concerned about taking 'prescription drugs' to bring those numbers down.

But those medications are not the only key to controlling high blood pressure/hypertension. Everyone who has high blood pressure should lead a healthy lifestyle. This plays an important role in treating your high blood pressure especially it can help to make the medication more effective.

And lifestyle changes should be adopted by the whole family, as this may prevent high blood pressure from occurring later in life. In fact, a healthy lifestyle will also make some one feel better generally.

Lets talk about only two major today:

Cut down on salt and intake of Potassium

If you cut down on the amount of salt you eat your blood pressure will come down even further.

Just 1 level teaspoon of salt has 2,300 mg of sodium. Individuals suffering from hypertension should consume 2-3 gm of salt daily. Even a modest drop off in the sodium in diet can decrease blood pressure by 2 to 8 mmHg.

And bigger cutbacks mean greater reductions in blood pressure. Even some foods we think are healthy, such as some vegetable juices, may contain surprisingly high amounts of sodium. In order to make food palatable and to add more flavour with less salt one should make use of

herbs, pepper powder, lemon juice etc. Also avoid food items like jam, canned fruits, sauces, pickles, salted biscuits, potato chips, salted dry fruits, cheese and butter.

Potassium, which is found in fruits and vegetables can help to lower blood pressure. Some Potassium rich foods are coconut water, water obtained after boiling Moong Dal, Amla, Guava, Papaya, Sweet lime, Peaches and Plums.

However, many people will also need to take medication to control their condition. The higher your blood pressure, the more likely it is that you will need to take medication and the more likely it is that this will be the only thing that will lower your blood pressure.

Regular physical activity and weight control

Blood pressure often increases as weight increases. Losing just 10 lb can help reduce your blood pressure significantly. As a general rule, the more weight you lose, your blood pressure will be much better. Losing weight also helps the prescribed drugs for blood pressure to be more effective.

Besides shedding extra fat, one should also keep an eye on another important marker — the **waistline**. Carrying too much weight around waist can put someone at greater danger. Men are usually considered at risk if their waist measurement is greater than 40 inches (102 cm). And women usually are at risk if their waist measurement is greater than 35 inches (88 cm).

However, for people of Asian descent, men are considered at risk if their waist measurement is greater than 36 inches (90 cm), and women are at risk if their waist measurement is greater than 32 inches (80 cm).

LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE

Study finds depression can trigger diabetes

REUTERS, Washington

People with depression have a higher risk of developing the most common form of diabetes than others, according to a study published that sheds light on the interplay between the two conditions.

The study indicated that the relationship between type 2 diabetes, the form of the disease closely linked to obesity and sedentary lifestyle, may be a bit like a two-way highway. Not only can diabetes lead to depression, as has been well established, but depression can also lead to diabetes.

U.S. researchers led by Dr. Sherita Hill Golden of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore tracked an ethnically diverse group of about 5,000 men and women between ages 45 to 84 for about three years.

They found that people with symptoms of depression were 42 percent more likely to develop diabetes by the end of the study than those without such symptoms. They also found that the more serious the symptoms, the higher the risk of diabetes.

The researchers statistically accounted for factors including obesity, lack of physical activity and smoking, and found that the risk for diabetes was still 34 percent higher in patients with depression.

"When we looked at the people in our study who had elevated symptoms of depression, they were more likely to eat more calories, they exercised less, and they were more likely to be current smokers. And as a consequence, they were also more obese," Golden said. The study was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

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"And those are all known risk factors for type 2 diabetes. So it seems that some of the adverse health behaviors associated with depressive symptoms were an important component of that relationship (between depression and diabetes)."

Golden added that depression also pushes up the levels of stress hormones such as cortisol.

The study also measured the risk for developing depression among people who already had diabetes. To do this, the researchers excluded people who had elevated symptoms of depression at the outset of the study.

People who had been treated for diabetes were 54 percent more likely to develop depression symptoms than the others.

An anomalous finding was that people who were deemed pre-diabetic — the precursor to diabetes — as well as people who actually had diabetes but did not know it were about 20 percent less likely to develop depression than non-diabetics.

The researchers suspect this may be at least in part because those people did not have the psychological burden of knowing they had a serious disease like diabetes. Evidence is building that depression can trigger diabetes.

A study last year in the journal Archives of Internal Medicine headed by Mercedes Carnethon of Northwestern University in Chicago, who participated in the new study as well, found that people age 65 and older with symptoms of depression were more likely to develop diabetes than those without depressive symptoms.

FOR YOUR HEALTHY HEART

Vitamin D may protect against heart attack

Men with low levels of vitamin D have an elevated risk for a heart attack, researchers said in the latest study to identify important possible health benefits from the "sunshine vitamin."

In the study, men classified as deficient in vitamin D were about 2.5 times more likely to have a heart attack than those with higher levels of the vitamin.

"Those with low vitamin D, on top of just being at higher risk for heart attack in general, were at particularly high risk to have a fatal heart attack," study author Dr. Edward Giovannucci of the Harvard School of Public Health and Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston said in a telephone interview.

The body makes vitamin D when the skin is exposed to sunlight. Milk commonly is fortified with it, and it is found in fatty fish like salmon.

Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium and is considered important for bone health. In adults, vitamin D deficiency can lead to osteoporosis, and it can lead to rickets in children.



A number of recent studies have indicated vitamin D also may offer a variety of other health benefits, including protecting against types of cancer including colon and breast cancer, peripheral artery disease and tuberculosis.

In January, researchers led by Dr. Thomas Wang of Harvard Medical School reported findings that fit with the new study, showing that people with low vitamin D levels have a higher risk for heart attack, heart failure and stroke.

Giovannucci said there is enough evidence about the value of vitamin D to encourage people to ensure they have normal levels. He said people can learn their vitamin D levels by having their doctor give them a blood test. Those whose levels are too low can take vitamin D supplements, he said.

"Many people have low vitamin levels," Giovannucci said.

"Traditionally, physicians have only been concerned about the bone effects. But perhaps having these chronically low levels of vitamin D may be having these subtle physiological changes in a lot of tissues," Giovannucci added.

Giovannucci said there could be a number of ways in which vitamin D may protect against heart attack. He said it might lower blood pressure, regulate inflammation, reduce calcification of coronary arteries, affect the heart muscle or reduce respiratory infections in winter.

Source: Journal Archives of Internal Medicine

Many ignorant of heart attack signs

Many people with heart disease do not know the symptoms of a heart attack, even though their risk of suffering one is five to seven times higher than those with no such history, researchers reported.

Symptoms can include nausea and pain in the jaw, chest or left arm. But the research team said shorter hospital stays and a move to outpatient treatment have decreased the amount of patient education on the subject.

Kathleen Dracup and colleagues at the University of California, San Francisco, School of Nursing said they looked at 3,522 patients in the United States, Australia and New Zealand who had previously suffered a heart attack or had undergone a procedure, such as angioplasty, for heart disease.

They found that 44 percent of them scored poorly on a true-false test measuring how savvy they were about symptoms.

Women in general along with patients who had taken part in cardiac rehabilitation, those with higher education, younger people and those who were treated by a heart specialist rather than a family doctor tended to have the best scores on the test, the report said.

"In decades past such patients were frequently hospitalized and would receive education and counseling from physicians and nurses during their hospital stay," they said in the report.

"Unfortunately structural changes in health care delivery have led to decreased

lengths of hospital stay and increased use of outpatient facilities...which in turn have had a dramatic effect on the time available for the education of patients," they added.

Those who suffer a heart attack have a better chance of surviving if treatment begins within one hour, the study said, but most patients are admitted to the hospital 2-1/2 hours to three hours after symptoms begin.

The authors said numerous studies have found that patients who have already suffered an earlier heart attack do not seek help any faster than those who had no such health history. Given the lack of knowledge about the range of symptoms as measured in the study, they said, that is not surprising.

Source: Archives of Internal Medicine

Basic laparoscopy course offered in the city

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Laparoscopic technique has been accepted as a standard practice worldwide. The learning curve of laparoscopy is long and skill development opportunities for future specialist surgeons are extremely limited in Bangladesh. This inspired Prof Dr M A Salam, a pioneer urologist of this country to establish a training center for basic and advanced laparoscopy.

Basic laparoscopic course has been

designed for medical graduates who are willing to make their career as general surgeons, gynaecologists or urologists. This course will also be suitable for the specialists who would like to learn and practice laparoscopic surgery in their discipline.

The two week course has two components, didactic part and hands on practical part. The didactic part of the course will provide an in depth review of basic laparoscopic technique and its principles while the practical portion



Prof Salam is showing the simulator to Valerie Taylor and former advisor Mr Mahbulul Alam.

will train by practice of dry simulations. Dry simulations operative session helps to be trained for laparoscopic tissue dissection, applications of knots, sutures and anastomoses of GI or GU tract.

The course will be coordinated by Prof S A Khan, Urologist and Transplant Surgeon of Department of Urology, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) and Dr Md Shafiqur Rahman, Assistant Professor, urologist and uro-

oncologist of Department of Urology, BSMMU.

Courses are likely to start from next month at Salam Urology and Transplantation Foundation, House 11, Road 5, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205. Tel: 01720197152 (Sabbir Ahmed Khan (Rony)) Email: info@swt.org.bd; Website: www.swt.org.bd

Prof Salam told Star Health that all courses to be conducted will be non profit and subsidised by Salam Welfare Trust.

Don't pump up the volume



REUTERS/YURIKO NAKAO

Next time you crank up the volume, beware: an Australian government report said young people risk developing permanent hearing problems if they listen to loud music through headphones.

The report urged people to listen to MP3 players at a moderate level to protect their ears from long-term harm.

Professor Harvey Dillon, from the government-funded Hearing Australia, said many young people did not realise that hearing damage was permanent.

"If it is loud, it can cause damage, and if it does cause you damage, it is permanent," Dillon told.