

# Climate change isn't just environmental — it's a migraine risk too

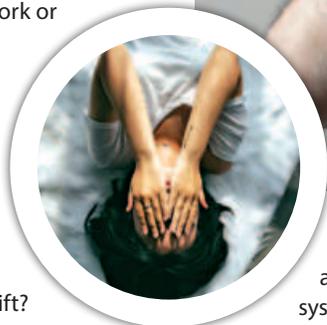
Migraines are not just bad headaches. They are a neurological condition marked by intense, throbbing pain often accompanied by nausea, and episodes of visual or sensory disturbances that signal a migraine attack.

Many people experience two to four migraine days a month, but recent research suggests that the frequency and impact of migraine attacks have increased significantly. A key finding from recent studies is that the severity of impairment caused by migraines almost doubled between 2005 and 2018, meaning more people are not just getting headaches, but losing productive time at work or school because of them.

Reports also show the condition is affecting men more frequently than before, narrowing the historical gap between male and female migraine rates that previously affected women.

So, what's behind this shift? Genetics, stress, sleep patterns, and diet have long been known triggers, but they don't fully explain why migraine incidence and disability are rising. Researchers are turning attention to environmental factors — and one of the most talked-about suspects is climate change.

Climate scientists and health professionals are beginning to see a pattern: weather extremes and atmospheric changes that come with a warming planet can increase the likelihood of migraine attacks. Sudden shifts in barometric pressure, swings between hot and cold, and more frequent heatwaves appear to be linked to migraine flare-ups in susceptible individuals.



Meteorological instability affects the body's vascular system — blood vessels expand or contract with pressure changes, and for some, that physical response can trigger a neurological cascade leading to migraine pain.

Temperature alone has also been implicated. Rising temperatures not only increase the risk of dehydration — a known migraine trigger — but may stress the body's ability to regulate its internal environment.

A study in Germany found that people who had suffered heatstroke were significantly more likely to be diagnosed with migraine later, suggesting that extreme heat events can have lasting neurological impacts.

Climate change doesn't just bring heat; it brings more abrupt weather. Storms,

rapid changes in humidity, and pressure drops are classic complaints among migraine sufferers. These environmental triggers don't cause migraines from scratch, but they lower the threshold at which a migraine attack happens.

A person might otherwise manage daily triggers well — stress, bright light, skipped meals — but when a weather disturbance is added to the list, it can push them over the edge into pain. Air quality is another environmental concern. Pollutants associated with fossil fuel combustion and wildfire smoke — both increasing with climate change — are known to inflame neural pathways and impair vascular function.

Poor air quality doesn't just aggravate asthma; it can trigger systemic inflammation that some researchers believe is linked to the physiological processes

underlying migraine attacks.

It's important to note that not every migraine sufferer will see weather as a direct trigger, and climate factors are only part of a much larger puzzle. Genetics still plays a role; migraines often run in families. Other familiar triggers include stress, hormonal changes, certain foods and disruptions in sleep.

But the emerging pattern is clear: environmental change may be stacking additional risk onto an already complex condition. Many patients report that migraine frequency and intensity seem to correlate with more erratic weather patterns — an anecdotal observation that researchers are now taking seriously.

So, what can individuals do? While we can't control the climate, migraine management strategies include identifying personal triggers, maintaining regular sleep and eating habits, staying well-hydrated, and working with healthcare providers to tailor prevention and treatment plans. Awareness of patterns — such as weather-related triggers — can help people anticipate and mitigate attacks more effectively.

The increase in migraine burden over recent years is real, and the factors behind it are multiple. What's different now is that scientists are looking beyond individual lifestyle and biology — and acknowledging that our changing planet may be influencing how often and how severely people experience neurological pain.

If climate change is indeed part of the equation, addressing it becomes not just an environmental imperative but a public health issue that reaches into everyday lives, communities, and health systems alike.

**By Ayman Anika**  
**Photo: Collected**

## #LIFEHACKS

# How to make life easier in 2026 without burning out

Every new year comes with pressure to optimise everything — work, health, relationships, routines. But the smarter move in 2026 may be the opposite. Making life easier is not about adding hacks. It's about removing unnecessary effort. When we stop treating busyness as a virtue, everyday life becomes more manageable.

### Stop over-managing small tasks

Not every email needs a response. Not every item needs to be folded a certain way. Constant micro-management drains mental energy. Choosing which details actually matter can reduce daily stress without lowering standards where it counts.

### Reduce digital noise

Group chats, work platforms, and social media create a false sense of urgency. Many messages do not require immediate attention. Turning off notifications, muting non-essential threads, and responding on your own schedule can dramatically



improve focus and calm.

### Simplify health routines

More products do not equal better results. Whether it's skincare, supplements, or fitness routines, complexity often creates confusion. Focusing on essentials — sleep, movement, hydration, and consistency — does more than chasing trends.

### Let go of "perfect" productivity

You do not need to optimise every hour. Productivity is not about constant output; it's about sustainable effort. Accepting

slower days without guilt prevents burnout and makes progress more consistent over time.

### Make peace with a little mess

A perfectly tidy home is not a moral achievement. Designating areas for clutter and accepting visual imperfection can make your space easier to live in. Order should serve you, not stress you.

### Be selective with social commitments

You do not have to attend every gathering or stay until the end. Leaving early, saying no, or skipping plans doesn't make you rude — it makes you honest. Protecting energy improves relationships instead of harming them.

### Stop forcing enjoyment

Finishing books you do not like or continuing shows out of obligation adds unnecessary friction. Letting go of things that do not resonate creates space for

what actually does.

### Travel slower, not harder

Trying to see everything often means enjoying nothing. Fewer plans, longer pauses, and flexible schedules make travel restorative rather than exhausting.

### Accept imperfection as normal

Not every problem needs fixing immediately. Not every day needs improvement. Accepting discomfort as part of life — instead of a failure — reduces anxiety and builds resilience.

### Ease is a skill

Making life easier is not laziness. It's discernment. In 2026, the goal is not to do everything better — it's to do fewer things with more intention. When effort is reserved for what truly matters, life naturally feels lighter.

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**Photo: Collected**