

10 Things to Eat and Drink For Headache Relief



By Carrie Havranek

Headaches can really sideline you when they strike, and if you get them often enough, chances are you have a sense of what may be triggering them. Chocolate. Dehydration. Red Wine. Stress. Blue cheese. Hormones. Children arguing nonstop thanks to pandemic quarantining. Ok, ok—you get the picture.

But often, headaches can be mystifying; it's not always clear what they are trying to tell us, even if we are pretty intuitive about our bodies. It may be what we're eating—or not eating—that's setting them off. Or some combination of both.

We talked to some holistic practitioners about how food may help with headaches. Here's what they told us.

Magnesium

Many of us are deficient in this mineral, which can manifest as headaches. The therapeutic use of magnesium for headaches is fairly well studied, and physicians recommend magnesium supplements, says Nick Bitz, N.D., a California-based naturopathic physician and chief scientific officer at Youtheory®.

[Serena Poon](#), CN, CHC, CHN, a chef, holistic nutritionist and founder of Culinary Alchemy in Santa Monica, California, recommends nuts and seeds for ongoing headache prevention, as they contain magnesium. (Luckily, they're pretty portable foods.)

Bitz points to a surprising source of magnesium: Sparkling mineral water, which he calls "an excellent source and supplies up to 200 milligrams of magnesium per liter of water. As an alternative, I often use magnesium cell salts or

liquid trace mineral drops to optimize mineral intake," he says.

Ginger

"Ginger is fantastic for headaches. I recommend making a strong ginger tea with honey or drinking a pungent ginger ale," says Bitz. "It has anti-inflammatory, spasmolytic, digestive and circulatory effects that may help undercut headaches."

Fermented Foods

We keep hearing about how important gut health is, and that's true for headaches, too. "Headaches can also be caused by an unhealthy gut microbiome, due to a poor diet and other lifestyle factors," says Poon. She suggests making sure yogurt, kimchi and kombucha are regular parts of your diet to help balance your gut biome and "possibly decrease your chances of getting headaches."

Beets and Greens

We ask a lot of our liver on a day to day basis, and beets and greens are supportive foods. If it's not functioning optimally, it can throw us off. "Beets and cruciferous vegetables can help support healthy liver function. Holistic medical systems believe that headaches are often

associated with liver stagnation, so it is critical to ensure that your liver is healthy and smooth flowing," says Bitz.

Protein at breakfast

There are many reasons why we eat eggs for breakfast, and that's because protein-rich foods in the morning can help maintain steady blood sugar levels throughout the day, so that you avoid hypoglycemic reactions, which can include headaches, says Bitz.

Oatmeal and Apples

The fiber in oatmeal and apples keeps you regular, and they "create a downward-moving energy in the body that helps relieve stagnation in the head," says Bitz.

Caffeine

This is a bit of a double-edged sword. "It can be a trigger and a source of relief. If you know that caffeine is a trigger, avoid it. But otherwise the key is to moderate your consumption and be consistent in your daily use. Caffeine is a powerful circulatory stimulant and can help improve blood flow to the brain," says Bitz.

Water with added electrolytes

Dehydration causes headaches, as many of us know. Poon says an electrolyte drink or tablet may help you feel better, or make your own. "Simply add a little salt, fresh squeezed citrus juice and honey to a large glass or carafe of water," she says.

Black tea, more ginger, and homeopathy

Bitz's immediate relief regimen includes a strong cup of black tea, ginger rhizome extract (250-1000-mg per day), and homeopathic remedies such as *Natrum Muriaticum* or *Belladonna*.

Playing Detective

Ultimately, it's a process of elimination, and paying careful attention to detail. Poon says she usually recommends that her clients keep a headache nutrition journal, to see if there may be correlations between food and headaches. It's not always immediately obvious what's setting it off. "Though there are many similarities, headaches tend to be a unique experience from person to person," she says.

Bitz recommends working with a holistic healthcare practitioner to figure out what's going on. Food is often a key player.

"Food sensitivities or intolerances are primary

considerations when trying to undercut headaches. And unfortunately there's no blood test that can accurately identify these silent triggers. The only way to identify them is by doing a Food Allergy Elimination Challenge. It's considered the gold-standard for uncovering food sensitivities and is the only tool I recommend," says.