

*Migraine triggers are environmental factors, such as stress and/or diet, that act like a switch to "turn on" a migraine headache. Triggers do not cause a person to have migraines.*

- *Migraine triggers may include certain foods or drinks, certain smells or hormones, changes to sleep or eating schedules, or skipping meals.*
- *Different people react to different triggers – and not all people can identify consistent triggers.*

## How Triggers Work

Some people are born with a biochemical makeup that makes them more likely to have migraine headaches.

People with migraines are often sensitive to certain external and internal factors that act like a switch to "turn on" a migraine headache.

## How Are Triggers Identified?

Keeping a headache diary can help you identify migraine triggers. With each migraine, record food and drink, sleeping patterns, moods and emotions, the weather, and specific physical activities, as well as any changes to your regular routine, that occur prior to the migraine.

- After several headaches, a pattern may appear.
- For some people, eliminating triggers you can avoid helps manage migraines.
- A doctor can use the diary to help pinpoint triggers and identify the best treatment approach.

People may react differently to the same trigger. However, the more triggers experienced at one time, the more likely a migraine headache will occur.

### Learn More About Migraine

[www.headachetest.com](http://www.headachetest.com)  
Headache Impact Test™ – (HIT)\*

[www.achenet.org](http://www.achenet.org)  
or call 800-255-ACHE  
American Council for Headache Education

[www.headaches.org](http://www.headaches.org)  
or call 888-NHF-5552  
National Headache Foundation

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## Examples Of Triggers

### Hormones

- Menses (monthly period)
- Ovulation
- Hormone replacement therapy
- Oral contraceptives

### Diet

- Alcohol (especially beer and red wine)
- Aged cheeses (cheddar, gruyere, brie, camembert)
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG) – common in Asian food
- Artificial sweeteners
- Caffeine
- Nuts
- Nitrates and nitrites (found in hot dogs, bologna, and other processed meats)
- Citrus fruits (grapefruit, oranges, lemons, and their juices)

### Changes

- Weather
- Seasons
- Travel (crossing a time zone)
- Altitude
- Schedule changes
- Sleeping patterns (too little, too much, or changes in usual pattern)
- Diet
- Skipping meals

### Environmental Factors

- Strong lights
- Flickering lights
- Odors

### Stress

- Let-down periods (vacations, weekends, after a major event)
- Times of intense activity
- Loss (death, separation, divorce)
- Relationship difficulties
- Job stress, loss, or change
- Crisis