A Functional Medicine Approach to Headaches

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Not tonight honey, I have a headache!
Outline

I. Scope of the problem
II. Intro to Functional medicine as regards headache management
III. Causes and suggested treatments for Headaches
IV. Environmental triggers
V. Herbal and other therapies
VI. Case Scenarios (2)
VII. Conclusion
I. Scope of the problem

More than 10 million Americans suffer from migraines. Migraine headaches add $13 to 17 billion to our healthcare costs each year.

So this is a HUGE problem both for those who suffer and for society as a whole.
I. Scope of the problem

There are a host of preventive drugs.

Triptans can stop a migraine once it starts.

Botox is used to paralyze muscles to prevent migraines.
II. Intro to Functional medicine as regards headache management

Functional Medicine is medicine by cause; not by symptom. In Functional Medicine the question we ask is not, “how do we treat a migraine?” but rather, “what’s causing the migraine?”
III. Causes and suggested treatments for Migraines

Let’s go through some of the things that can cause migraines, because 10 people with the exact same symptoms might have very different underlying causes.
IV. Environmental triggers

A. Food Sensitivities and Allergies
B. Bowel and gut imbalances
C. Chemical triggers
D. Hormonal imbalances
E. Mitochondrial imbalances
F. Sleep cycle
G. Magnesium deficiency
H. Blood sugar stability
I. Stress – emotional and physical
IV. Environmental triggers
A. Food Sensitivities and Allergies

- Peanuts
- Dairy
- Eggs
- Yeast
- Corn
- Sugar
- Citrus
- Tea
- Coffee
- Chocolate
- Beef
- Alcohol
- Soy
- Wheat
- Seafood
IV. Environmental triggers

B. Bowel and Gut Imbalances

Gluten allergy. This is a special kind of food allergy that creates a lot of inflammation. Many people are sensitive to gluten, the protein found in wheat, barley, rye, oats, and spelt. Wheat and gluten are among the biggest causes of headaches and migraines.
IV. Environmental triggers

Elimination diet

- Remove common food allergens
- Food allergy or sensitivity testing
- Get the gut healthy
  - enzymes
  - probiotics
  - omega-3 fats

Do food/symptoms diary - what food you eat and what symptoms you notice - symptoms can occur up to 72 hrs after a particular food is eaten.
IV. Environmental triggers

C. Chemical Triggers

- Aspartame
- MSG (monosodium glutamate)
- Nitrates (in deli meats)
- Sulfites (found in wine, dried fruit, and food from salad bars)
- Tyramine-containing foods like chocolate and cheese
- Food dyes/artificial colors/flavors
IV. Environmental triggers

D. Hormonal Imbalances

Many women get premenstrual migraines, which is often caused by imbalances in estrogen and progesterone—too much estrogen, not enough progesterone.
IV. Environmental triggers

D. Hormonal Imbalances - treatment

- Dietary changes
  Low glycemic, high phytonutrient diet rich in plant foods
- Exercise and stress reduction
- Eliminating caffeine, alcohol and sugar
- Acupuncture and herbs
- Hydration
IV. Environmental triggers

E. Mitochondrial imbalances

Some people who don’t get enough riboflavin, (B2) or CoQ-10 get migraines. Other micronutrients could also be missing.

Some symptoms that could accompany this deficiency could be fatigue, muscle aching, and brain fog, although sometimes the only symptom can be migraines.
F. Sleep cycle

Regular sleep schedules are important for people with migraine tendencies.

Go to bed before 10pm every night to ensure restful sleep, and minimize or eliminate screen time for at least 2 hours before bedtime.
IV. Environmental triggers

G. Magnesium Deficiency

Magnesium is the relaxation mineral. If you’re deficient in it, you can often get headaches and migraines.
IV. Environmental triggers

H. Blood sugar stability

• Small, frequent meals
• Mediterranean diet
• Light snack one hour before bed
IV. Environmental triggers

I. Stress – emotional and physical

Making lifestyle changes to manage stress can also decrease the number and severity of your migraines and tension headaches.
V. Herbal and other therapies

- Butterbur (Petadolex)
- Feverfew
- Ginkgo Biloba
- Essential oils
- Biofeedback
- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Postural assessment/ergonomics
- TMJ management
VI. Case Scenarios

A. Tom Malterre
VI. Case Scenarios

B. Mark Hyman, M.D.

Dr. Hyman is a practicing family physician, a nine-time #1 *New York Times* bestselling author, and an internationally recognized leader, speaker, educator, and advocate in his field. He is the Director the Cleveland Clinic Center for Functional Medicine.
Conclusion

Questions or comments?

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