

second opinions

» LEADERS IN NATURAL HEALTH DISCUSS ALTERNATIVE TREATMENT OPTIONS

BY MARIE MONEYSMITH

manage your migraines

As the 25 million Americans who suffer from migraines know, these headaches have a well-deserved reputation for being difficult to handle. While experts know migraines are more common in women and tend to run in families, treating these intense headaches is complicated because their cause is not completely understood. Learn how to survive migraines by pinpointing hidden triggers and using nutrients and herbs for pain.

Not only are migraines intensely painful, but they also can cause loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, difficulty concentrating and impaired vision.

Esther Blum, M.S., R.D., C.D.-N., C.N.S.» When it comes to common “triggers” that initiate migraines, Esther Blum, M.S., R.D., C.D.-N., C.N.S., considers the amino acid tyramine, found in cheeses, pickled meats, aged and smoked meats, red wine, beer and chocolate, to be a prime suspect. To determine if a client’s headaches are caused by tyramine or another food, she recommends an elimination diet for two to four weeks. The diet consists of lean protein such as fish, turkey, chicken and eggs, unlimited amounts of raw and cooked vegetables, gluten-free grains such as brown rice and quinoa, and fresh fruits (but no juices or dried fruit). After about one month, one new food is added back into the diet every four days, says Blum, starting with whole grains (like oatmeal, whole-grain breads, nuts, seeds and maybe a little alcohol). “Patients have to keep a food log to determine their reactions,” she explains. “Some foods are short-acting and trigger a headache in 24 hours,

but the long-acting triggers can take as long as four days to have an effect.”

Strengthening the immune system is another way Blum helps clients conquer migraines. Once allergenic foods are identified with the elimination diet and food log, they are removed from the diet for three to six months. At the same time, Blum asks patients to take immune-building supplements, including a good multivitamin and 1 tablespoon of *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, mixed with water or plain yogurt, with breakfast and dinner. “Acidophilus restores the good bacteria in the intestines, which boosts the immune system,” she explains.

Blum also recommends taking 2 500-mg capsules of fish oil three times daily to fight inflammation. “It takes at least two months for the supplements to strengthen the immune system,” she says. “And during that time, it helps if patients learn to control stress, avoid taking on extra obligations, and avoid smoking and drinking alcohol. This combination can help migraine sufferers get rid of their headaches.”

For more information: Esther Blum, M.S., R.D., C.D.-N., C.N.S., (212) 614-2339; 149 Fifth Avenue, Suite 729, New York, NY 10010; www.essentialnutrition.com



A registered dietitian, **Esther Blum, M.S., R.D., C.D.-N., C.N.S.**, obtained her Master of Science degree from New York University, and is also certified in holistic nutrition. She specializes in treating medical problems that may not respond to conventional treatments.

Alexander Mauskop, M.D., L.Ac., is the director of the New York Headache Center. A board-certified neurologist, he has conducted headache research for more than 15 years, and has had work published in many scientific journals. He is the co-author of *What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About Migraines* (Warner Books, 2001).



Karen Dustman is a practicing attorney in Gardnerville, Nev., and a member of the National Association of Science Writers. She is the author of *Migraines and Women* (Woodland Publishing, 2001), and several other books. Her Web site is www.karendustman.com.

Alexander Mauskop, M.D., L.Ac.» Based on research, including his own published studies, Alexander Mauskop, M.D., L.Ac., has found a combination of three supplements—the mineral magnesium, riboflavin (vitamin B2) and the herb feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*)—provides relief for many migraine sufferers. The trio is available in combination products or the nutrients can be