Headache Relief... Naturally
By Shannon Morehouse, MA, CHHC; Laurel Sterling, RD; and Carol Blair, DiHom, CNC

It happened again! You were feeling great and then all of a sudden out of nowhere—BAM—you are assaulted by a debilitating, painful headache. Headaches, whether sinus-related, tension-based, or migraines can be day killers. We’re here to help you prevent these headaches through nutrition advice, stress reduction, and supplementation recommendations.

Food Culprits
Fasting or skipping meals can trigger dips in blood sugar that may set off a headache. Be sure to eat regular meals and snacks that are balanced with a combination of protein, carbohydrates, and fats. If you experience chronic headaches, take a look at your diet and examine whether your foods contain properties that can spark headaches. You will want to avoid foods that contain tyramine [aged cheese (blue, brie, cheddar, feta, gorgonzola, mozzarella, munster, parmesan, Swiss and more), processed meats, pork, chocolate, red wine, chicken, bananas, nuts, and nut butters], caffeine (sodas, teas, coffee, energy drinks, chocolate), tannins (navy beans, kidney beans, lima beans, red wine, chocolate, teas), sulfites (dried fruits, red wine), or Phenylalanine (MSG, nitrates, aspartame).

Beneficial Foods
Foods that contain bromelain or quercetin can provide headache relief as they are natural antihistamines, making them especially helpful for sinus headaches and headaches that are due to allergies. Pineapple is the food choice highest in bromelain. Fruits and vegetables that are high in quercetin have red pigmentation (red onions, red apples); teas such as chamomile are also high in quercetin.

Managing Stress
Emotional stress is one of the most common triggers of migraines and tension headaches. During stressful events certain chemicals in the brain trigger the “fight or flight” chemicals, which can provoke blood vessel changes that can cause migraine headaches. Tension headaches can either be episodic or chronic. Episodic tension headaches are usually triggered by an isolated stressful situation or a build-up of stress; daily stress such as from a high-pressure job can lead to chronic tension headaches.

Research shows that exercise is a powerful way to ease stress, even if it’s 20 minutes a day. Meditation and yoga are also great stress relievers. You may need to simplify your life to relieve stress; learn to say no; you need not be the manager of the universe. Also, be sure you get adequate sleep; one large study found those who slept an average of six hours a night tended to have significantly more severe and more frequent headaches than those who got more than six hours of sleep.

Supplementation
Many supplements can help keep headaches at bay. Magnesium is one of the most important supplements for all kinds of headaches; it’s a natural relaxant. In order for magnesium to work optimally, supplement with a B-complex. Hormone imbalances can cause headaches; Enhanced Estrogen Detox can help with this issue. For sinus and allergy-provoked headaches, taking bromelain or quercetin in supplement form can help as can the herb Feverfew. Breathing in the essential oils of peppermint and...
Eucalyptus can act as a decongestant in sinus headaches; place a few drops in your shower as steam will help with the decongestion. The herb Butterbur helps with migraine headaches; left-sided migraines may be due to a zinc deficiency whereas right-sided migraines may be due to a potassium deficiency. Co-Enzyme Q10 at doses of 150 mg per day reduced migraines by 55% in three months according to a recent study. There are many homeopathic remedies and formulas for various types of headaches; make an appointment with our wellness educator Carol Blair in order to learn about the homeopathic formula that will work best for you.

Headaches are complicated. Your headaches may be caused by a variety of factors. If you would like personalized help on relieving your headaches once and for all, make an appointment with Laurel or Carol (our wellness educators) to address it. Our wellness educators provide complimentary consultations to all customers; call the store at 315-671-5172 to schedule your appointment.

Please note that the pricing reflected in this article does not reflect current pricing; it reflects pricing specials during the month the article was published.