Fighting off Migraines In Summer Weather

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Migraine in Summer: Why Summertime May Increase Your Migraines

Each season seems to deliver its very own specific migraine triggers. Avoid them and you might be OK, but live your life and you are going to be under attack. For me, summer seems to lead the way for the most painful and disruptive migraines.

Part of me dreads the season, which I hate because summer and I used to be best friends.

Gone are the days of cool drinks and carefree fun in the hot summer air. Now I'm hiding from the bright light of day and sprawled out by an air conditioner in a darkened room trying to hold down toast.

This is not how anyone wants to live their life from June through August.

Why Summer and Migraines Don't Mix Together

So why does summer bring us migraine sufferers more pain? There are some theories.

- **Certain weather and atmospheric factors affect the sinuses.** This, in turn, triggers migraine attacks.
- **The intense heat and humidity can make this season a top contender in provoking migraine attacks.** Summer allergens, such as grass pollen, are a big factor for many.
- **Occasional dehydration (because sometimes we love iced coffee more than water) further supports the seasonal triggers.** Losing a lot of water and sodium through sweating can trigger migraines. Essentially, the body loses a lot of sodium through sweating, and when sodium goes down to a certain point it can be very headache-provoking.
- **Over-hydration (yes, that is a thing) can cause a migraine.** Over-hydration can also throw off the balance of electrolytes, which can lead to a migraine.
- **Warm summer breezes are behind the spread of mold spores.** These may cause inflammation in the bronchial tubes and sinuses, and also trigger migraines.
- **Changes in normal sleep patterns and eating times are also known to trigger migraines.** Longer days can often keep you awake later and more active until bedtime. People also tend to eat differently and off a normal schedule in the summer. Foods tend to less healthy, with barbeques offering us meats with nitrates and other preservatives, and potato chips on every picnic table.
- **Those tasty margaritas don't help, either.** Alcoholic beverages are a known trigger.

According to experts, there are numerous triggers that can make summer an especially painful time of year for those who are prone to migraines. In fact, some research indicates that summer may be the worst time of year, though it really depends on what factors set off migraines.

Migraines and the Weather: It's a Factor

With more than 100 known migraine triggers out there, it is also believed that migraines are often caused by changes in temperature, humidity, and barometric pressure. It is not the weather itself, but the fact that it is *changing* that serves as a trigger.

Other studies indicate that seasonal migraines are linked with actual changes in brain chemistry, such as serotonin levels, which occur during certain times of the year. Let's face it, our regular activities, sleep patterns, and daily obligations change based upon the seasons and often the weather.

The best defense is to understand what is triggering your headaches and seek alternative coping mechanisms that help limit your summer migraine attacks.

Keep a track of what triggers your summer migraines, try to avoid getting overtired or too much sun, and take medications for any seasonal allergies when symptoms first appear. These steps will help in your migraine defense, but there is always more you can do.

How to Limit Migraine Triggers

- **Don't take on (or commit to do) too much — even fun summer activities.** Know your limits.
- **Stick to a strict sleep schedule.** Also, avoid sleeping with your bedroom windows open.
- **Make your home allergy-friendly by purchasing a HEPA filter.** You should also be keeping sheets, pillows, clothes, and furniture clean.
- **Drink enough water, take antihistamines, and use a nasal spray.**
- **Take supplements.** Try vitamins and minerals such as riboflavin, magnesium, vitamin C, and butterbur.
- **At the first sign of a migraine, take a hot shower and let the water hit your shoulders, neck, and top of your head.** Then, follow up with an icy cold pack (or an ice pack hat) from the freezer on the back of your head and neck.
- **Avoid being out in the sun without sunglasses.** Make sure you have access to shade if you start to feel unwell.
- **Avoid fragrances, which can be a trigger for some.**

If my migraine is in full attack mode, my doctor has recommended I take three migraine pain relievers (Like an Advil migraine) taken with a cold and caffeinated beverage, followed by lots of cold water, and finished with a couple of salty crackers or potato chips, which will take the edge off the pain and nausea some of the time.

A summer of migraines is not what any of us want. So, make every attempt to avoid your own specific triggers.

This may include keeping your windows closed during windy days, and use an air filter to remove allergens from the air you breathe. Maintain a regular sleep schedule, and drink water even if you don't feel thirsty yet. The more you do to avoid your triggers, the more fun your summer can actually be.