

Top Ten Tips for a Bright and Cheery Holiday Season

Essential tips to ensure a headache-free holiday

Your holiday season can go from bright and cheery to dark and dreary in a quick instant. For many migraineurs, a variety of triggers can be responsible for headaches and agony that can easily be avoided. That is why the National Headache Foundation (NHF) has come up with 10 tips to ensure your holiday is headache-free and enjoyable.

1

You need your sleep. Migraineurs find themselves staying up later and waking up earlier to prepare for the festivities. Research has shown that sticking to a routine sleep pattern, even on weekends, can greatly reduce the risk of headaches.

2

Beware of food triggers. Be aware of the foods you are consuming as many may contain high levels of tyramine. Known food triggers include monosodium glutamate (MSG), aged cheeses, nuts, pickled vegetables, salami, bacon, herring, snow peas, sourdough breads, beer, wine, soy or teriyaki sauces and citrus fruits. The NHF low tyramine headache diet is available at <http://www.headaches.org/pdf/Diet.pdf>.

3

Monitor alcohol intake. Overindulging in alcohol can not only put you at risk for a hangover headache but can trigger a headache during the party; especially red wines, sherry, Vermouth and ale beer. Consuming mixed drinks containing fruit or vegetable juices will probably have less effect than straight alcohol.

4

Travel with ease. The key to easy travel is being prepared. Unexpected delays can force travelers to skip meals. Be sure to carry healthful snacks with you and have your medications packed in your carry-on bag, not in your checked luggage.

5

Plan for alone time. Holidays bring families together for quality time, but being with your family over several days, perhaps in close quarters, may be stressful. When the family chaos becomes overwhelming, take a break by going for a walk or visiting friends.

6	<p>Manage stress and anxiety. Make lists, set realistic expectations and maintain a reasonable schedule with room for flexibility. Consider practicing biofeedback or relaxation techniques to help you release the stress from a long day.</p>
7	<p>Keep your headache diary current. The holiday season is an exceptionally good time to track your headaches because it is easiest to see a change in your headache pattern when your lifestyle differs from the norm. Be sure to share your headache diary with all of your healthcare providers including physicians, nurses, and pharmacists.</p>
8	<p>Avoid smoke or perfume. Smoke and perfume are identifiable headache triggers that can linger for long periods of time. If possible, get some fresh air or find an area that is smoke- and perfume-free.</p>
9	<p>Take your medication. If you are on a preventive medication, be sure to continue to take it as prescribed during the holiday season. Acute medications should be taken at the first sign of a migraine to keep the headache pain from progressing. If you are taking over-the-counter medications, be careful not to exceed the package directions. Your pharmacist can help you understand the package labeling.</p>
10	<p>See your healthcare provider. If you find that you are experiencing more frequent or severe headaches during the holidays, you should make a specific appointment with your healthcare provider for an accurate diagnosis and to develop a treatment plan. The NHF has an online database of physicians with an interest in headache.</p>



For more information on headache causes and treatments, visit www.headaches.org or call 1-888-NHF-5552 (M-F, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. CT).



Your pharmacist is available to discuss headache triggers and appropriately taking your medications.