

Contributing Factors

What you will learn

1. What contributing factors are
2. Common contributing factors including sleep, caffeine, missing meals, physical activity, and stress

What are contributing factors?



- Contributing factors differ for each person.
- The combination of factors can move you toward your headache threshold.
- Avoiding all potential contributing “trigger” factors is unhelpful and can stop you from doing the things that bring you pleasure.
- Your headache diary can help you look for patterns to identify your own contributing factors.
- The best way to prevent your headache symptoms from increasing is to keep a consistent schedule.

Sleep

Understanding the different stages and early warning signs allows you to act before your symptoms progress.

- Sleep is a restorative process for your body.
- Your sleep may be impacted when you have headache pain.
- Stimulus control and sleep hygiene can help improve your sleep.



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Caffeine



- Caffeine is found in many over the counter headache medications.
- It is all about finding the right balance – a little caffeine can help your headache symptoms, but too much can make your headache worse.
- Try to limit the amount of caffeine you use in a day (200mg/day).
- The amount of caffeine differs by brand and type of coffee.

Missing Meals



- Missing or delaying meals can impact the onset of your headache pain and symptoms and make them worse.
- Try not to miss meals.
- Space out your meals so you are eating at regular times throughout the day.
- Make sure you are drinking enough water throughout the day, too.

Physical Activity



- Physical activity at a moderate intensity can help you reduce stress and pain, as well as decrease the frequency of your headache pain and symptoms.
- You want to be exercising hard enough that you can still speak but it's hard to carry on a normal conversation.
- Aim for 30 minutes a day of physical activity – it doesn't have to be all at once, you can break it up throughout the day.
- Many daily active leisure tasks can help you meet your activity levels.

Stress



- Stress can impact other factors – your sleeping and eating habits may change when you are feeling stressed which can make your headache worse.
- Keep an eye out for any unhelpful thoughts or behaviors when you are stressed.
- Even reductions in the level of stress from one day to the next can increase the likelihood of a headache onset (stress-let down headache).
- Remember, consistency is key.

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Goal Setting

S

SPECIFIC

M

MEASURABLE

A

ACTION-ORIENTED

R

REALISTIC

T

TIME-BOUND

GOAL SETTING

S

SPECIFIC

Goals should be concrete and specific. Who, Where, When, Why, How?
E.g., "I will drink one cup of coffee at 8am daily" vs. "I will drink less coffee"

M

MEASURABLE

There should be an easy way to measure your progress toward your goal.
E.g., "I will walk for 30 minutes per day" vs. "I will get in better shape"

A

ACTION-ORIENTED

Action goals help create actual change. What action do you need to take?
E.g., "I will write down my symptoms using my headache diary" vs. "I will notice my symptoms"

R

REALISTIC

Goals should be realistic. Unrealistic goals can lead to giving up.
E.g., "I will practice PMR for 20 minutes a day" vs. "I will meditate for 3 hours a day."

T

TIME-BOUND

Set the time period for accomplishing the goal.
E.g., "I will set my alarm for 6am each day by Friday" vs. "I will set my alarm for 6am"

practice progressive muscle relaxation

(What **Specific** activity will you do? Think who, where, when, why and how)

For 20 minutes each day

(How will you **Measure** your progress? How much? How often?)

Is my goal **Action-Oriented**? YES NO

Is my goal **Realistic**? YES NO

I will complete my goal by... *By Friday*

(What is your **Time**-frame?)

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TIME-BOUND

Why is this goal important to me?

(What **Specific** activity will you do? Think who, where, when, why and how)

(How will you **Measure** your progress? How much? How often?)

Is my goal **Action-Oriented**? YES NO

Is my goal **Realistic**? YES NO

I will complete my goal by:

(What is your **Time**-frame?)

Why is this goal important to me?

Potential Obstacles:

- 1.
- 2.

Potential Solutions:

- 1.
- 2.

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