Migraine Tools

Important notes:

- These are tools that people living with migraine have suggested
- The efficacy and effectiveness may vary greatly
- Look for the free options as there are many inexpensive, free or DIY (do-it-yourself) options to consider
- Where products are available on Amazon, only products with 4 stars out of 5, or higher have been listed. Any products with a small amount of reviews or unverified reviews have not been shown
- These tools should not replace your medication without your physician's advice and any treatment changes you make must occur under the supervision of your physician

FOR ACUTE MIGRAINE ATTACKS

Ice

- Use a free ice pack you have at home. Numb the pain and take the edge off an attack
- An icy drink. Some people have reported that this helps provide relief
- Headache Hat – designed by a migraine patient, a cotton, spandex micro fleece that covers the head
- Migraine Cooling Headache Pads. Lightly scented
- Some people have suggested that “polarization” may be helpful. I.e. Lie down in a dark room and put an ice pack on your head and a heat pack on your feet. Or soak your feet in a tub of hot water and put an ice pack on your head. The hot and cold at the same time may be soothing and according to some people it may provide some relief during a migraine attack

Sleep

- Many people with migraine find sleep during a migraine attack can provide significant or even full relief
- Deliberate yawning
- Eye mask – to shut out the light
- Dark, quiet room – minimizes additional pain from light and sound during an attack. Also helps with sleep
Compression Eye Mask & Pillow It’s freezable, it can soothe tired, puffy eyes. Provides cooling relief and blocks out light

See sleep section below for more.

Bath/shower

- Bath option 1) During and/or after an attack. Blend your own oils and a relax in a bath helps to try relax during the pain. This may help to prevent tension experienced in the head, neck and shoulders
- Bath option 2) If possible, hop in a hot bath in which you dissolve 2 cups Epson salt and 1 cup baking soda. Place ice on neck, lay back and rest for 10 mins. The heat pulls the blood downward and the ice keeps it out of your head again, while the magnesium and soda balance out your ions. That may help to abort or to drop the pain level down to manageable
- Bath option 3) Soak feet in hot water – may help take the edge off during an attack
- Take a hot shower – heat may help some people more then cold, everyone is unique

Caution: Drowning is an unfortunate possibility for a hemiplegic migraine attack if an attack occurs in a bath tub. This is not appropriate for those with hemiplegic migraine.

Essential Oils

Common oils mentioned by people with migraine are:

- Lavender
- Eucalyptus (Migrastick)
- Peppermint
- Lemon

Which may be mixed in blends and rubbed onto pressure points or tender areas like the back of the neck, temples and forehead during an attack. Sometimes even the feet.

Caffeine

A double edged sword. Can be used for good or evil (i.e. can help or hinder). Often not recommended by physicians if you have chronic migraine but in episodic acute attacks it can be used to enhance the effectiveness of some medications by up to 30-40%. Caffeine can also increase your risk of rebound headache or medication overuse headache. Proceed with caution and medical supervision.
Ginger

Eating ginger sweets and candies may provide relief from the nausea associated with a migraine attack.

There is also some evidence that suggests the right dose of ginger may abort a migraine in some people.

Trigger/ Pressure points

- Massage the webbing between the thumb and first finger with the other thumb and first finger for one minute using medium pressure. Then consider repeating on the other hand. This is one type of pain point massage which may help decrease pain
- Applying pressure to a throbbing temple may reduce the blood flow and relieve pain while pressure is maintained

Hydration

Having fluids at the first signs of an attack or during the early signs is thought to be helpful. Dehydration is a known migraine trigger. Some people may find additional electrolytes and salts more helpful than hydration through water alone.

- Some sports drinks may contain electrolytes and salt but beware of additional inflammatory ingredients like sugar

FOR MIGRAINE PREVENTION

STRESS

Relaxation practices

- Deep breathing
- Meditation
- Progressive Relaxation
- Time spent in a calming place away from triggers
- Time spent in nature, outdoors
- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Acupuncture
- Aromatherapy
- Hot bath/shower
Calm – a meditation app for sleep and stress meditation

Other activities

- Drinking tea
- Playing with your pet – pets make great nurses
- Practice gratitude – remember the good days and what you achieved. Even if it is just getting up, getting dressed and sitting outside for some sunshine
- Keep a regular routine
- Binaural music – music that produces a meditative state. Earphones required
- Journal – write, start a gratitude journal, make lists, breathe
- Essential oils that calm and relax
- Have a chat either while out on a walk or for tea, over the phone or even in a support group. It’s about spending time together. The important thing is to get ‘outside your illness’ and feeling connected to the world
- Laugh more
- Have a hobby
- Exercise regularly
- Be good to yourself and carry on
- Educating self on migraine – greater understanding can reduce anxiety, improve confidence and sense of control

MUSCLE TIGHTNESS/ STIFFNESS

Heat

- Heat cream
- Tiger balm or similar
- Wheatpack
- Flaxseed heatpack
- Hot water bottle
- Oat or clay pack

Massage

- Free option: put two tennis balls in a sock and tie the sock. Then use the tennis balls to target your problem area. Golf balls may also be another option
- Spikey Massage Ball – 3 inch, diameter
- Theracane – cane-shaped massager for easing aches and pains
- Electric Massager
- Shiatsu neck/shoulder massager
- Trigger point therapy – focusing on key trigger points in the back of the head, neck and shoulders
- Foam roller
- Acupressure Massage Mat which helps with tight muscles and stress relief. Apparently it’s like an at-home acupuncturist

Stretch

- Isometric neck exercises for headache and neck pain
- Shoulder and neck stretches
- Physical therapy exercises
- Occipivot – used to help manage poor spinal alignments, poor posture, headache and neck pain.

Other

- Travel pillow to support the neck
- Vertical mouse to relieve pressure on shoulder and neck for those who spend long periods of time at the desk

SLEEP

Tools

- Sleep Mask
- Nature sounds – Ocean waves, nature, rain for deep sleep and relaxation
- Music – reiki healing music, gentle bells etc
- Blackout blinds/ curtains
- CPAP machine – to treat sleep apnea. Personal sleep study recommended. Studies have shown people with migraine who suffer sleep apnea can significantly reduce their migraine frequency by treating their sleep apnea

Pillows

- Duck Down Pillow – remouldable to suit your position without the stems characteristic of feather pillows
- Memory Foam Pillow
- Buckwheat Husk Pillow – common in Japan and typically lower cost versus Memory Foam Pillow
■ Cold eye mask – an eye mask kept in the fridge or freezer

VISION

Tools

■ Axon Optics lenses
■ Theraspecs lenses
■ Irlen syndrome
■ Flux app – makes the color of your computer's display adapt to the time of day, warm at night and like sunlight during the day
■ Deluminate – invert the luminance of a website to make it easier on the eyes
■ UVEX glasses – cheap and designed for electrical workers… but a cheap way test if colored lenses could help
■ Adjust the brightness of screens – TV, smartphone, computer, iPad etc
■ Light filters on bright devices for computer, phone or TVs

SOUND

Tools

■ Ear plugs
■ Noise-canceling headphones
■ Free music to encourage relaxation & calm
■ Spotify or Pandora are freemium or paid options to find calming music to listen to

HYDRATION

Tools

■ Stainless steel water bottle
■ BPA free plastic water bottle

ODOR

Tools

■ Mint lip balm – to mask surrounding odors
■ Candles or essential oils which emit a pleasant and calming fragrance
JAW
Tools

- Occlusal splint (from the dentist)
- Mouthguard from a sporting store – a cheap alternative but it could ruin your bite and cost more in the long term

APPS
Tools

- MigraineBuddy -migraine diary, impact reports, intelligent sleep recording and doctor finder
- Curelator – migraine diary, 3 maps, protectors and analytics
- Headspace – a gym membership for the mind
- MeLady – menstrual cycle tracker
- Twilight – blue light filter for your phone and tablet for healthier circadian rhythms in the evenings
- MyFitnessPal – free calorie counter, diet and exercise journal
- Cronometer – to track your fitness health and nutrition data
- Calm – a meditation app for sleep and stress meditation

BOOKS
For patients

- 7 Steps To A Pain Free Life: How To Rapidly Relieve Back, Neck and Shoulder Pain – Robin Mckenzie
- Heal Your Headache – David Buchholz
- Living Well With Migraine Disease and Headaches: What Your Doctor Doesn't Tell You… That You Need To Know – Teri Robert
- Migraine: (Contemporary Neurology Series) Dr David Dodick & Dr Stephen Silberstein
- The Migraine Miracle: A Sugar-Free, Gluten-Free, Ancestral Diet to Reduce Inflammation and Relieve Your Headaches for Good – Josh Turknett
- The Keeler Migraine Method A Groundbreaking, Individualized Treatment Program Dr Robert Cowan
- The Migraine Brain, Dr Caroline Bernstein and Elaine McArdle
- Trigger Point Therapy for Headaches and Migraines: Your Self -Treatment Workbook for Pain Relief – Clair Davies NCTMB
You Can Heal Your Life – Louise Hay

Adult coloring books

OTHER CATEGORIES

Miscellaneous Tools

- Neuromodulation devices (eg. Cefaly, Vagus Nerve Stimulator, SpringTMS)
- Daith Piercing
- Magnesium salts, sprays, and oils
- HEPA air filter – removes dust, allergens, pet dander, mold spores and plant pollens from the air
- Probiotic for stomach/gut health
- Prayer – can bring comfort to those who have faith
- Eating a healthy diet rich in plant based foods and minimising processed foods
- Service dog – for migraine alerts, mobility work, and other tasks

Thank you to everyone who responded and helped to create this list. This list was created by members of the Migraine World Summit community to benefit each other. Even the smallest contribution can lead to big results when we all act to support each other.

Are we missing any suggestions? Let us know in the website chat or leave a message for our team to review.

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