

Managing a Migraine: A personal account

Migraine headaches are a literal pain. They make you so grumpy you crave quite, dark places and cold compresses and you will try almost anything that hasn't been tried before to make it go away. I understand the pain. I have suffered from migraine headaches since my early twenties.

In my twenties, the migraines were debilitating and guaranteed. I tried several different medications, but often they were ineffective and had their own negative side-effects. I tried to avoid the usual triggers, coffee, chocolate, fats, salt and wine - to no avail.

It was not until my early 30's that I found the few things that made a difference. Don't get me wrong, I still get migraines, but they are no longer guaranteed, and some months they don't come at all. When they do, they are more than manageable with over the counter medication, and sometimes just with a good night of rest.

Still, much research and many medications later there is no cure for the migraine and the origin is still a mystery. So what can we do that doesn't involve another medication?

What I have done, is find some management strategies that have been helpful for me, and may be a good adjunct to your own migraine treatment regime. Here are the strategies I have found to work the best for me:



Movement: I am not the consummate exerciser, but I have a short morning stretching routine that includes some basic core moves and neck strengthening exercises. My job is very physical and that helps too. I figure if migraines are vascular, then movement helps to maintain good circulation.

Manual Therapy: Probably the turning point for me was getting manual therapy. Osteopathy, massage therapy, and physiotherapy all helped to get me to a place where my migraines became manageable and I could stop taking over the counter medication on a frequent basis. I still maintain a monthly manual therapy treatment regime for prevention.

Naturopathy: I am all too fallible when it comes to foods I like, but what I did do was learn about the kinds of foods my body is sensitive to and the kind of moderation of wheats, fats and sugars that will help keep me balanced.

Appropriate Rest: If and when I do get a migraine, I have learned to be good to myself. I will decline social engagements to rest. I will set myself up in a dark room with a cup of tea and some quiet. It is important not to struggle though a migraine if you can help it.

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