

Nutrition Series

Creating a Food Diary

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How to Create a Food Diary

A Food diary can take many forms. Some people like to use a spiral notebook or desk diary for recording the information. Others prefer to draw up a template for a diary page on a sheet of plain paper, then make photocopies, which they put in a loose-leaf notebook.

Remember, for migraine patterns to become apparent, you may need to keep the diary for at least a month, or even for several months if your headaches are widely spaced. So be sure to have enough diary pages prepared in advance.

Whatever form your diary takes, make a real effort to include the following information. (Adding subheads on your diary page is a good way to remember what you need to fill in.) Review your entries often and share any patterns that emerge with your doctor.

- Date and time of day of each headache.
- Duration of the attack.
- Specific symptoms, not only during the migraine but also before and after.
- Whether there was nausea and vomiting.
- Medications taken, including prescription and over-the-counter remedies.
- Other remedies and self-care strategies used (supplements, ice packs, chiropractic, self-hypnosis).
- All food eaten, with rough amounts and times eaten.
- Whether eating certain types of food preceded the headache.
- All drinks taken, with rough amounts and times drunk.
- Any missed or delayed meals, or the start of a diet.
- If female, the time in your monthly cycle that the headaches occur.
- Whether the headaches are triggered by physical or environmental factors, such as odour, noise, or certain kinds of weather.
- Any changes in your life that took place near the onset of your migraine.

For instance, did your daily stress level increase, were you travelling more, was there any sudden excitement or news, did you do additional exercise, was there a change in bowel patterns, or was the amount of time you slept different?

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