

# 3 Ways to treat migraines

We ask three experts for alternative suggestions on how to treat migraines

**Q** I am a 32 year old woman who has suffered from migraine attacks since the age of 16. They seem to occur around the time of my period or when I least expect it. My doctor prescribed me pain killers that can make me feel even more dizzy and nauseous despite slightly helping with the pain. When a migraine strikes, I have to take the bed for a day or two until it subsides. I smoke around 15 cigarettes a day and I eat on the go, grabbing sandwiches and crisps at work. Sometimes I don't get the chance to eat a proper meal at dinnertime. I know I have to at least cut down and eventually give up the cigarettes but I'm looking for advice on changes I can make to my lifestyle/daily habits to try and reduce the migraine attacks.



## The acupuncturist:

**SUZANNE CAFFERKY** is an acupuncturist/herbalist practicing in Drogheda.  
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Migraine is most common in women with a female to male ratio of 2:1. Recurring attacks are more commonly triggered by lack of food, lack of sleep exposure to light and hormonal irregularities. Your lifestyle is irregular and your migraines are triggered at menstruation, which points to hormonal imbalances. However a more detailed interview would need to be taken to diagnose properly but in Traditional Chinese Medicine, there is a saying "where there is pain there is no free flow and where there is free flow there is no pain." This means that the free flow of blood and qi (energy pronounced chee) allows the body to be in balance and sufficiently nourished. For sufficient qi and blood to be present in the body, everyone needs to be sensible about energy expenditure, eat healthily, exercise moderately and rest enough. Often lifestyle behaviour is a symptom of stress, which inadvertently causes or magnifies illness or pain in the body from a TCM point of view. An acupuncturist would work according to this, your unique presentation and alongside the care of your GP, with a treatment over three menstrual cycles you should see an improvement.



## The doctor:

**MARK ROWE**

Dr. Mark Rowe is a G.P., author and motivational speaker. His medical practice is based at the Waterford Health Park which he founded. Dr.

Rowe's special interests include means health and preventative health screening. He is author of The Men's Health Book- A guide for the Irish Man with all royalties going to a cancer charity. For more information [www.whp.ie](http://www.whp.ie)

There are a few things that can certainly help, the first thing is to keep a symptom or headache diary. That will give you a very good insight in to when the migraines tend to occur for example at different times of the month, when you are very stressed at work, just before a period when you're premenstrual. They can also be related to your diet or long periods of time without eating. Also you need to stop the medication that is giving you the side effects and go back to your doctor and discuss other options. There are treatments that can relieve the headaches and those that can be taken on a preventative basis. Also some over the counter medication, particularly those that contain codeine can in itself cause a headache called a rebound headache so you could be making it worse. Contact the Migraine Association because they have wonderful information. [www.migraine.ie](http://www.migraine.ie)



## The dietitian:

**SARAH KEOGH, MSC., BSC., M.I.N.D.I.**, runs a private practice at the Albany Clinic in Lower Fitzwilliam Street in Dublin, as well as a food and nutrition consultancy ([www.eatwell.ie](http://www.eatwell.ie)).

Migraine can be an absolute nightmare and people will try everything to help relieve it. There are many things that trigger migraines in people – from stress, to diet to medication, to bad posture. Checking all of these things out may bring you some relief. From a diet point of view, several studies have found that people who regularly suffer from migraine can be sensitive to a chemical found naturally in

chocolate, cheese, bananas and coffee. It is worth cutting these out for 6-8 weeks to see if it makes a difference for you. Alcohol is often a problem and a ban on this for 6-8 weeks is also useful to see if you are sensitive. A calcium and magnesium supplement works for some people with migraine as it helps to relax the muscles around the neck and scalp, which are often linked to the onset of a migraine. Finally, regular eating is important. People who skip meals or eat on the run are much more likely to have migraine. You need to have breakfast, lunch and dinner everyday and you need to give yourself at least 30 minutes to eat lunch and dinner. If you have a long day, try not to go more than 3-4 hours without eating something, even if it is just a snack. Good luck!