# Migraines and Magnesium – Is this What Migraine Sufferers Are Missing?

Few things conjure up bigger grimaces and more dread than migraines. For sufferers, the effects are debilitating, the prevention is expensive and ineffectual, and pinpointing causality is very challenging.

## What Is a Migraine?

Migraines are still being studied and aren't fully understood. Originally thought to be a vascular condition, neuroscientists are now learning that it's not quite that simple. Migraines seem to be more nervous system related than they originally thought. What scientists do know is that during the onset of a migraine, there are some electrical changes that take place across brain tissue.

First, there is an initial wave of excitation, which basically means that there's an electrical wave that passes over the brain before the vessels begin to contract and then subsequently become inflamed. The rapid change in pressure is what causes unbearable pain.

This rapid contraction and inflammation of the blood vessels has been observed primarily in migraine patients who present with an aura and is believed to be strongly linked to those effects.

Migraines can last anywhere from 2 to 72 hours and typically present as an intense, pulsating pain on one side of the head. Symptoms vary wildly between patients, with sufferers experiencing intense symptoms often associated with strokes and seizures.

Migraines typically occur in stages. Long before the pain starts, many sufferers experience neck pain, tension, mood swings, and a general lack of focus. Without intervention, the migraine may progress to the aura stage, and then on to the pain stage, which can last for days.

## What is a Migraine with Aura?

Migraines can either be a simple combination of nausea and intense pain, or they can include a series of symptoms characterized as “aura”. Migraines with aura may include any combination of the following symptoms:

- Partial temporary loss of vision (blind spots, fuzziness)
- Visual anomalies, like zigzag lines, white spots, and in some cases, colorful lines and spots
- Numbness and tingling in the extremities
- Dizziness and disorientation
- Difficulty with speech and comprehension
- Intense nausea and vomiting
- Extreme sensitivity to light and sound

Migraines with aura present with a series of interesting neurological electrical patterns that scientists use to study them. Without an MRI, they can sometimes be confused with strokes or seizures. The symptoms are intense and often very alarming for the patient. Experiencing a migraine with aura can be terrifying.

## The Difference Between a Migraine and a Headache

This is where things get a little grey. There is a simple distinction between migraines and headaches, and knowing the difference can help reduce their frequency.

Though tension and sinus headaches can concentrate in a certain part of the body, (like the neck, forehead, or sinuses), the pain of a migraine is almost always focused on one side of the head.

# The Causes of Migraines

**Common migraine triggers:**

- MSG
- Carrageenan
- Gluten
- Energy drinks, caffeine, nicotine, and other stimulants
- Artificial dyes, flavors, and sweeteners
- Stress
- Lack of sleep
- Hormonal imbalances
- Alcohol
- Poor kidney function
- Hypertension
- Dehydration
- Sluggish endocrine system
- Leaky gut
- Chronic constipation
- Hypothyroidism

Conventional migraine treatment and prevention don’t consistently work. Prevention involves expensive daily medication, and the efficacy of these drugs vary wildly. The side effects of these drugs are often intense, and patients are faced with deciding whether the tradeoff is worth it.

Side effects can run the gamut from mild to pervasive and include everything from nausea to memory problems. Some report weight loss, weight gain, nausea, eyesight disturbances, and even numbness and a disturbing loss of motor function. In short, migraine prevention drugs are expensive, and generally

not worth the side effects.

## Magnesium – The Miracle Mineral

For many people, magnesium is the simple, cheap, and effective home remedy they've been looking for.

Magnesium is astounding in its importance in the human body. This mineral is used in more than 300 enzyme systems in the body that regulate everything from protein synthesis to blood pressure. Magnesium is required for bone development and structure and DNA and RNA synthesis. It even plays a crucial role in heart rhythm and muscle contraction.

Magnesium is arguably one of the most crucial minerals for our bodies' health and well-being, and yet it's estimated that 80% of Americans suffer from magnesium deficiency. The vast majority doesn't even know it.

Magnesium deficiency is very common due to the increasingly processed diet so many people in the developed world consume. There's plenty of magnesium found in nuts and greens but none found in potato chips and bread.

## Why Magnesium Can Stop a Migraine in Its Tracks

So what makes magnesium one of the most effective ways to prevent and treat migraines? Though the evidence of users is still largely anecdotal, the consensus seems to be that it's magnesium's effect on the nervous system and the role it plays in muscle function that makes it such an effective migraine prevention and treatment.

Magnesium gets the body's systems moving. It is frequently used as an anti-inflammatory treatment by athletes and is frequently recommended by physicians for conditions like

restless leg syndrome.

Over the decades, only a few studies have been conducted to determine the efficacy of magnesium. Results have varied. Researchers have discovered that test subjects show low levels of magnesium during a migraine.

Salome Range, a certified holistic health coach says,

> *After looking into information about magnesium supplementation for my own health, I also read about how low magnesium levels can be linked to numerous ailments, including migraines and morning sickness. I happen to know many people affected by both and started offering a topical magnesium body butter which was received with high praise."*

Her custom butters take advantage of magnesium's easy absorption into the skin.

> *The more and more people who come back to me and tell me it's been a lifesaver convinces me of the efficiency and importance of magnesium. I have also experienced major relief from chronic pain with regular magnesium supplementation."*

Though more studies are needed to confirm the efficacy and effects of magnesium on sufferers of migraine attacks, regular use and application during a migraine headache have been reported to reduce and even completely stop migraines in their tracks. It's definitely worth a try.

# Using Magnesium for Migraine Prevention

Magnesium is available in several different mineral compositions and forms. As with most vitamins and minerals, the best way to get it into the body is through a healthy, balanced diet. Minerals in foods are usually accompanied by

what the body needs to adequately absorb them. If not, other needed nutrients will be available through a wholesome, unprocessed diet.

Ditching the sweets and chips and reaching for salads and sprouted raw mixed nuts are good ways to increase magnesium intake. Greens, legumes, nuts, and seeds are good dietary sources of magnesium. A spinach salad with some garbanzo beans and walnuts makes a nutritious, magnesium-rich lunch. The benefit of getting magnesium from a variety of whole foods is that nutrients stay balanced. Foods contain all the cofactors and co-nutrients in the amounts for best digestion, assimilation, and optimal health. When you're using supplements, you need to become a bit more savvy about how nutrients influence and synergistically affect each other.

> *Chlorophyll, which enables plants to capture solar energy and convert it into metabolic energy, has a magnesium atom at its center. Without magnesium, in fact, plants could not utilize the sun's light energy. " – The Need For Balance by Michael Spencer*

**Some Foods High in Magnesium:**

- Seaweed, agar, dried (770 mg)
- Coriander (dried) (694 mg)
- Cocoa, dry powder, unsweetened (499 mg)
- Flaxseed (392 mg)
- Almonds (247mg)

Though choosing the "right" formulation of magnesium can certainly impact how well the body actually absorbs this mineral, studies have shown the greatest factor in mineral absorption varies with individual organ and body chemistry. Kidney function, for example, plays a tremendous role in how well the body stores and distributes magnesium. Since the body stores and redistributes magnesium as needed via the kidneys, so it makes sense for some to supplement when dietary intake

cannot provide and maintain adequate levels.

In addition to oral supplementation, topical application of magnesium oil is a fast way to get magnesium into the body. Since magnesium is stored primarily in muscle tissue and bones, the best bet for immediate migraine relief is to rub magnesium directly into the closest available muscle tissue.

Using magnesium oil or magnesium butter on the neck is the most effective way to use magnesium to treat a migraine headache. It can also be rubbed into the scalp and forehead.

Magnesium injections are another alternative that some physicians offer. As regular readers know, OLM does not recommend this method.

## Magnesium Supplementation

As a migraine sufferer, my M.O. with magnesium is to kick migraines in the teeth long before they become an issue. If you suffer from migraines and you know you're not a salad munchin', nut crunchin' kinda person, start supplementing daily. I like this one. Before shopping, here's what to know about picking the right kind:

> *If for whatever reason you decide you need a supplement, be aware that there are a wide variety of magnesium supplements on the market, which includes Magnesium glycinate, Magnesium carbonate, and Magnesium citrate. Courtesy of the fact that magnesium must be bound to another substance. There's simply no such thing as a 100% magnesium supplement. The substance used in any given supplement combination can affect the absorption and bioavailability of the magnesium, and may provide slightly different, or targeted, health benefits* – *Dr. Mercola*

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| **Magnesium glycinate** is a chelated form of magnesium that tends to provide the highest levels of absorption and bioavailability and is typically considered ideal for those who are trying to correct a deficiency. | **Magnesium oxide** is a non-chelated type of magnesium, bound to an organic acid or a fatty acid. Contains 60 percent magnesium, and has stool softening properties. |
| **Magnesium chloride / Magnesium lactate** contains only 12 percent magnesium but has better absorption than others, such as magnesium oxide, which contains five times more magnesium. | **Magnesium sulfate / Magnesium hydroxide** (milk of magnesia) are typically used as a laxative. Be aware that it's easy to overdose on these, so ONLY take as directed. |
| **Magnesium carbonate,** which has antacid properties, contains 45% magnesium. | **Magnesium taurate** contains a combination of magnesium and taurine, an amino acid. Together, they tend to provide a calming effect on your body and mind |
| **Magnesium citrate** is magnesium with citric acid, which has laxative properties | **Magnesium threonate** is a newer, emerging type of magnesium supplement that appears promising, primarily due to its superior ability to penetrate the mitochondrial membrane, and may be the best magnesium supplement on the market |

The doc goes on to say that it's important to maintain balance with magnesium, calcium, vitamin K2, and vitamin D.

> *For example, Lack of balance between these nutrients is why calcium supplements have become associated with increased risk of heart attacks and stroke, and why some people*

*experience vitamin D toxicity.”*

I take it in conjunction with a whole-food multivitamin and an otherwise fairly balanced diet, and some vitamin D and calcium. If my diet is particularly crappy one week, I double up on my dose, but if I’m doing a good job of eating my vegetables, I may even be bold enough to skip a dose. To each their own.

When it comes to symptoms of an oncoming storm, immediate intervention is needed. I keep magnesium butter on hand that my good friend, Salome, concocted and massage it into the left side of my neck where the trouble usually starts. This always (knock on wood) stops migraines in their tracks.

Magnesium oil is a good way to get magnesium into the body fast. If you’re in a particularly tight spot and feel a migraine coming on, start working it into your scalp and even try for your forehead. Though these spots will be less effective, as long as you have adequate circulation, it should still help. Maximize the effect with a plunge into an icy shower to get your blood flow up. On that note, check out Hot and Cold Hydrotherapy.

A hot bath with bath salts detoxifies the body, and it’s a great way to destress. It’s also a great way to absorb lots of magnesium in your body. All natural bath salts contain magnesium and many other minerals, coupled with the benefit of your pores opening in the hot water which increases absorption into the blood stream. This is not the most bioavailable way to consume the mineral, but it is a good supplement to a broader supplementation routine and an enjoyable way to escape a migraine. It also makes sense to use oils and baths for those with impaired digestion, which is the case with most who suffer from migraines.

## Related Reading:

- *Homemade Calcium and Magnesium*
- *Natural Remedies For Migraines That Work Fast*
- *How to Cure Lyme Disease and Virtually Any Other Bacterial Infection, Naturally*
- *How to Detoxify and Heal the Lymphatic System*
- *Hypothyroidism – Natural Remedies, Causes, and How To Heal the Thyroid*

## Related Products:

- Magnesium
- Bath Salts
- Shillington’s Nerve Sedative
- Cayenne Pepper Liquid Extract
- Shillington’s Pain & Headache Formula
- Lavender Essential Oil
- Peppermint Essential Oil
- Vitamin D
- Calcium