

McMigraine: A 'happy meal' for headache relief?

A rather unexpected duo is making the rounds on social media as the latest migraine "cure."

Some creators are promoting the "McMigraine meal," a recommendation to go to McDonald's and purchase a Coke, along with French fries, to provide relief from a migraine.

The thought process? Creators are suggesting the caffeine from Coca-Cola, mixed with salt in fries, could work together to take major headaches away.

Ashley Workman is an advanced practice registered nurse with OSF HealthCare Illinois Neurological Institute (OSF INI). She works in the headache and cranial facial pain program and spends time as an advanced practice provider clinical educator for OSF HealthCare.

According to the [American Migraine Foundation](#), approximately 39 million Americans live with migraine.

While there's some surface level truth to the claim about caffeine, ordering a large soda isn't your best bet, Workman says.

Caffeine is known as an adjunct therapy to help reduce migraines. Sometimes over-the-counter medications that have caffeine in them provide relief as well.

"In theory, purchasing a Coke from McDonald's is still not the healthiest option. But I can't argue that caffeine doesn't have a benefit when someone is having a migraine headache," Workman says. "Caffeine can also help with vasoconstriction. There is a vascular side of migraines, so that's where that comes in, to provide benefit."

French fries: Full of salt

Sodium is both a mineral and an electrolyte (when mixed with body fluids), that along with potassium and magnesium, is known to fight dehydration. These electrolytes are known to prevent or help manage headaches. Salt (sodium chloride) is approximately 40% sodium, but Workman says a stack of fries, once again, shouldn't be your go-to for sodium intake.

While this McMigraine combo *might* provide short-term relief for *some* people, the long-term risks are far greater.

Long-term risks of ultra-processed foods

"Ultra-processed foods are connected with a higher risk of obesity, developing Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease," Workman says. "It can also impact people to live a sedentary lifestyle, which can affect our mental health. So, it can really have a spiral effect on our health from a long-term perspective."

Migraines are very individual to the person. "What works for one person might not work for another," Workman adds.

Instead of rushing through the fast-food line for a quick fix, it's important to get to the root of the problems and find a solution. Many causes of migraines, Workman says, come from lifestyle choices and environmental issues.

"We need to think about what in our lives could influence migraines. Whether that be our sleep pattern, stress levels, what we're eating and drinking and caffeine intake," Workman says. "From a female perspective, hormonal influence. We really need to step back and figure out what influences our migraines and then alter our lifestyle if we can."

Exercise can benefit migraine patients:

"Any form of exercise is going to be beneficial for those with migraines," Workman says. "So, it's about finding what works for you. Because some exercise, if it's too rigorous, can trigger a migraine."

Workman adds that keeping a consistent routine is also extremely important.

"That means getting up at the same time each morning and not sleeping in too much on the weekends. That can also trigger migraines," she says.

The importance of drinking water

Swap the soda out with an ice cold glass of H₂O.

"Water is so important. Drink lots of water, 40 to 80 ounces depending on the person. Especially if you exercise or are working outside, you need to be drinking more water and maybe even mixing in electrolyte drinks," Workman says. "And avoid artificial sweeteners because those can trigger migraines as well."

Magnitude of magnesium

Workman calls magnesium a wonderful supplement that can be implemented in a day-to-day routine. She will recommend magnesium oxide (400 mg a day) to certain patients who are undergoing migraines. Sometimes it can be hard on the stomach, so it needs to be taken with food. Magnesium complex is sometimes handled better from a stomach perspective, which is a mix of different types of magnesium.

If pharmacy-based options aren't working, there are some devices available that can be used to treat migraines.

Neuromodulation

Neuromodulation is a non-pharmacologic option for migraine management.

"There are several different types, and they can vary significantly in cost. Specifically, the Cefaly is an FDA-approved, over-the-counter neuromodulation device, which can be used for migraine prevention or acute relief. It utilizes external trigeminal nerve stimulation (eTNS) by delivering mild electrical impulses through an adhesive electrode placed on the forehead," Workman says. "For individuals seeking a non-pharmacological approach to migraine management, this is certainly one option. The device is available for purchase online without a prescription, providing greater accessibility for patients."

If you're missing work or family functions due to migraines, Workman says to seek care from a medical provider. There are treatment options available, and you shouldn't be in pain when you don't need to be.

To learn more about resources available for those with headaches or craniofacial pain, visit the [OSF HealthCare website](#).