Script – Broadcast – The pain of starting a diet

INTRO

You’re watching what you eat, the numbers are starting to move in the right direction, and you’re feeling pretty good about your new diet. Then comes a headache – an annoying side dish you never ordered.

It could be tied to the diet you just started, according to medical experts.

It’s not common, but weight loss methods can leave your head aching especially if you’re not eating or drinking enough, according to BreAnne Gendron, APRN, a nurse practitioner with OSF HealthCare.

When you start a diet, you generally eat less, regardless of what type of diet you decide to do, she says. If it's a whole food or keto or anything where you're taking in less food, you're probably going to run the risk of having low blood sugar. And occasionally, it can cause headaches.

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To combat these problems, Gendron recommends eating several small meals a day to keep your blood sugar from dropping. And make sure to drink at least 40 to 60 ounces of water each day. Carrying around a 20-ounce water bottle will serve as a handy reminder you need to sip your water throughout the day. Eating food rich in water like celery or cucumber can also help keep you hydrated.

But Gendron recommends talking with your provider who might suggest a certain electrolyte replacement plan.

Drastically cutting carbs can send you into ketosis, which means your body transitions to burning fat for energy instead of carbohydrates. And that can cause brain fog or a headache. Some people say there're a couple days where you feel pretty crummy. They call it the keto flu.

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Then there are certain foods that trigger migraine headaches. That list includes aged cheeses, caffeine, chocolate and cured meats. Your best bet is to eliminate those foods from your diet. Gendron says it’s all about trial and error when it comes to food choices.

The bottom line, though, is to make sure you’re eating enough calories, drinking enough water and not missing meals. If the headaches persist, Gendron says it’s probably time to reevaluate your diet and speak to your medical provider or dietitian.

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BreAnne Gendron, nurse practitioner, OSF HealthCare

“You have to find what works for you, and not everybody's the same,” she says. “I know when my blood sugar gets low, I can feel it. I'll get a headache and I get a little weak. And if you feel like you need to eat, it's OK to eat. Choose something healthy, have a small meal and find out what works for you. You don't want to be miserable.” (:20)