

YOUR HEALTH

with Jill Robinson



Cheesed off!

Migraine facts

What is migraine?

Migraine is a condition that causes episodes ('attacks') of headaches. Other symptoms such as feeling sick or vomiting are also common. Between migraine attacks, the symptoms go completely. There are two main types of migraine:

Migraine without aura – sometimes called common migraine.

Migraine with aura – sometimes called classic migraine.

Who gets migraine?

Migraine is common. About one in four women, and about one in 12 men, develop migraine at some point in their life.

It most commonly first starts in childhood or as a young adult.

Some people have frequent attacks – sometimes several a week. Others have attacks only now and then. Some people may go for years between attacks.

In some cases, the migraine attacks stop in later adult life. However, in some cases the attacks persist throughout life.

What are the symptoms?

Both types of migraine frequently start with changes in mood and feelings of general hunger or particular food cravings.

Migraine attacks last from four to 72 hours and are usually felt on one side of the head.

During this time sufferers usually need to lie down in a quiet and darkened room since the throbbing headache is often made worse by movement, noise and light.

How can migraine be treated?

Not everyone with migraine needs to see a doctor, but if painkillers bought from the pharmacist are not helping, attacks are coming more frequently, or there's a change from usual migraine symptoms, you must consult a doctor.

Treatment can include painkillers, possibly combined with anti-sickness medication, or medication to restore the normal levels of serotonin.

Some people find acupuncture, osteopathy, yoga or relaxation helps.

Advice and support

Migraine Action

Tel: 0870 050 5898

Email: info@migraine.org.uk

Website: www.migraine.org.uk

Migraine4Kids

Website: www.migraine4kids.org.uk

Migraine Trust

Tel: 020 7462 6601

Email: info@migrainetrust.org

Website: www.migrainetrust.org

Why dairy products are a real pain for Sarah

For most people, having a headache is borderline unbearable, but for people who suffer from migraine, it can be worse than anyone can imagine.

Migraine isn't just a typical headache, it can leave a sufferer feeling nauseous and often, unable to carry out normal everyday activities. The cause of migraine is not known but for Sarah White, right, a series of tests revealed that the migraines she had been having since the age of six were caused by dairy products. Here we find out more about Sarah's story and migraines themselves.

Sarah, 40, from Knuston, remembers having her first migraine around the age of six. She said: "My family knew I wasn't just playing up or exaggerating a headache because I was being physically sick, I was so ill I remember my mum being really quite worried.

"I think it was quite early for me to start having them as I think people are usually a little older than six and I used to get them more often as well, about three times a month when I was at secondary school.

"I used to have to take so many days off because I could hardly do anything, I couldn't think, I couldn't move around, I just had to go to bed and lie down in the dark in between being nauseous.

"The pain was excruciating too, I was often in tears because it felt like someone had driven a stake right through my eye and into my head.

"As I got older they became less frequent but in the last few years they increased again and I decided it couldn't carry on that way.

"Over the years I'd tried everything I could think of to help my migraines, physiotherapy, visits to nutritionists that kind of thing – but nothing helped.

"I'd read about something called Yorktest in a magazine a couple of years ago and I decided to give that a go, I had nothing to lose apart from the money.

"They sent me a pack and you had to prick your finger to draw blood and then send it back. After a few days you get the results, they run tests on over 100 different foods and they outline which ones you have no reaction to, which ones are a borderline reaction and then there are ones in red which tell you the foods that should be avoided.

"For me, wheat was borderline but things like cow's milk, egg white, egg yoke, peanuts and cashew nuts were what I needed to start avoiding.

"I'm a vegetarian but the changes I had to make meant I was practically a vegan, which made it very hard, but on the flip side, I didn't have a migraine during that first three-month trial period.

"The hardest thing is when I'm out shopping and want to grab a snack as I can't really have sandwiches or when I'm out for a meal because a lot of vegetarian dishes include cheese, egg or milk. But it's definitely worth it even though I can't sustain it all the time, I now know what causes my migraines, I just wish I'd done it years ago."

■ Sarah took a £20 first step food intolerance test from Yorktest laboratories. The test offers a negative/positive result and if found positive, clients can then upgrade to the second phase, a foodscan 113, which costs £265 and identifies the actual foods causing the intolerance. For details call Yorktest.com on 0800 074 6185 or visit the website.

