Managing Fibromyalgia and Migraines

by SARAH BORIEN

Coping With Fibromyalgia and Migraines

I have suffered from migraine since I was eight years old. I am now 31 and still suffer — though not as regularly — from these crippling headaches. Migraine is very common in fibromyalgia sufferers, and for many of us it's just part of our chronic pain.

Over the years I've tried anything and everything to cope with my migraines and, although I can't seem to shake them forever, I would be as bold as to say I am finally the one in control.

Here are helpful tips I've developed over the years for coping with chronic migraine:

Reduce Your Stress

Let's start with the triggers. Whether it's physical or emotional stress, get a good understanding of what triggers your migraines and do all you can to mitigate the risk. Changes to temperature and light are big triggers for me, but this is often difficult to control in the working day.

However, my own personal stress levels are in my control, so I do all I can to reduce the emotional stress in my life and remain as calm as possible.

Breathe

It sounds kind of obvious, but in keeping with reducing your stress, you need to breathe — big, deep, wholesome breaths that give your brain all the oxygen it could possibly desire. It was only recently that I realized I hold my breath when I'm stressed, as I'm sure many of us do.

Everything becomes tense and we breathe shorter, quicker breaths. When you feel your head start to pound, stop. Breathe deeply and slowly — the effects are quite amazing.

Sugar and Caffeine

Sugar and caffeine can often trigger a migraine but, for many of us, they can also help stop it. I drink a lot of tea in an average day and I always eat at regular intervals, so a lack of these things can start a headache that quickly progresses into a migraine. Sometimes a cup of tea and a biscuit can just stop things before they get worse — and this is a medication I'm definitely on board with!

Stretch

When you feel a migraine coming on, stretching is another thing that can help avoid disaster. In fact, there are

specific yoga poses that relieve migraine and give your body the rejuvenation that it craves. The Internet offers a large number of photographs and videos with yoga tips for migraine sufferers.

Yoga is also a good way of reducing stress, which in turn reduces the frequency of your migraines.

Next page: how massage, darkness, and hot or cold temperatures can soothe your migraines

Massage

Migraines are often triggered by muscle tension, and massage is a good way of relieving this. The type of massage can sometimes make or break your pain, so it's important you find something gentle and relaxing rather than energizing and invigorating — aromatherapy massage is a good starting point.

A Dark Room

This isn't always possible, but almost everyone who suffers from migraine is sensitive to light. When I have the start of a migraine one of the worst things I can do is drive at night because the bright headlights are guaranteed to make it worse.

Where possible, take yourself away from bright lights or computer screens and go into a dark room. A recent migraine on public transport made the dark room impossible, but my alternative was a warm hat that covered my eyes. It's the next best thing and I don't go anywhere without a warm hat.

Heat

Heat packs are my life line. When I'm having a bad migraine I need heat all over my head; it soothes the pain, helps me sleep, and has become somewhat of a security blanket over the years.

Cold

While heat works for me, others prefer the cold. There are many people who prefer an ice pack on the back of their necks, or put their hands in a sink full of cold water. Others prefer a mixture of both hot and cold, so try both and see what works for you.

Medication

Medication doesn't work for everyone, and it didn't work for me for a very long time.

I do believe it's a route worth pursuing, because if you can find something that helps catch your migraine in the early stages when nothing else can, that's a relief worth the years of trial and error.

Routine

Your body reacts to everything it experiences, so a stable routine is a way of keeping your migraines on track. Sudden changes to routine can increase your stress levels, which take you into the cycle of shortened breaths and tense muscles leading to a migraine in many cases.

Although this may seem like a predictable, mundane way to live, that is far better than being spontaneous and ill on a regular basis. My migraines leave me with no choice but to lie in a dark room and vomit until I can fall asleep — and no amount of spontaneity is worth that.