

## Dietary Triggers

CAFFEINE	Coffee, tea, iced tea and cola. Even decaf coffee and tea (which contain additional chemical triggers) may be a problem. Also, beware of coffee substitutes. Try caffeine-free herb tea (without citrus and other trigger flavors).
CHOCOLATE	White chocolate is okay; I'm not so sure about carob.
MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE	Chinese (and other) restaurant food; soups and bouillons; Accent and seasoned salt; flavored, salty snacks; croutons and bread crumbs; gravies; ready-to-eat meals; cheap buffets; processed meats; veggie burgers; protein concentrates; and low-fat, low-calorie foods. Watch out for hidden MSG (see Table 7, page 81).
PROCESSED MEATS AND FISH	Aged, canned, cured, fermented, marinated, smoked, tenderized—or preserved with nitrites or nitrates. Hot dogs, sausage, salami, pepperoni, bologna (and other lunchmeats with nitrites), liverwurst, beef jerky, certain hams, bacon, pâtés, smoked or pickled fish, caviar and anchovies. Also, fresh beef liver and chicken livers, and wild game (which contain tyramine).
CHEESE AND OTHER DAIRY PRODUCTS	The more aged, the worse. (Permissible cheeses include cottage cheese, ricotta, cream cheese and good-quality American cheese.) Beware of cheese-containing foods, including pizza. Yogurt (including frozen yogurt), sour cream and buttermilk are also triggers.
NUTS	Avoid all kinds, as well as nut butters. Seeds are okay.
ALCOHOL AND VINEGAR	Especially red wine, champagne and dark or heavy drinks. Vodka is best tolerated. Clear (ideally, distilled) vinegar is <i>allowable</i> . Don't overdo condiments (ketchup, mustard and mayonnaise) made with vinegar.
CERTAIN FRUITS AND JUICES	Citrus fruits (oranges, grapefruits, lemons, limes, tangerines, clementines and pineapples) and their juices—as well as bananas. Also avoid raisins (and other dried fruits if preserved with sulfites), raspberries, red plums, papayas, passion fruit, figs, dates and avocados.
CERTAIN VEGETABLES, ESPECIALLY ONIONS	Plus sauerkraut, pea pods and certain beans (broad Italian, lima, fava, and navy, and lentils). <i>Allowed</i> : leeks, scallions, shallots, spring onions; also garlic.

Table 6

## Dietary Triggers (continued)

FRESH YEAST-RISEN BAKED GOODS	Less than one day old: homemade (or restaurant-baked) breads, especially sourdough, as well as bagels, doughnuts, pizza dough, soft pretzels and coffee cake.
ASPARTAME (NUTRASWEET)	Saccharin (Sweet'n Low) may also be a trigger for some. As far as I know, sucralose (Splenda) isn't a problem.
OTHERS?	Perhaps soy products, especially if cultured (miso), fermented (tempeh) or otherwise highly processed (e.g., soy protein isolate/concentrate). Watch out for soy sauce containing MSG. Less risky are unflavored tofu and soy milk and flour. Soy oil is safe. Possibly tomatoes (and tomato-based sauces), mushrooms . . . whatever gives <i>you</i> a headache.

Table 6

only *after* you have achieved headache control and maintained it for four months or more. The details of how you can attempt to reintroduce items will be spelled out later in this chapter.

## When Is a Dietary Item a Migraine Trigger?

ANY RESEMBLANCE OF MIGRAINE dietary triggers to food allergies is only superficial. The role of dietary triggers in migraine has nothing to do with allergy, which is when your body's immune (defense) system overreacts to something. The effect of dietary triggers in migraine is not mediated by the immune system.

Having said that, I have to admit that the specific way in which dietary items trigger migraine is unclear. I find it helpful to imagine that they directly feed into and stimulate the migraine control center in the brain, stacking with other, nondietary triggers such as stress, hormones and barometric pressure changes, and pushing your total trigger level toward (or farther above) your threshold. The effect of each dietary trigger is dose-related: the more, the worse.