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Daily Dose: The Truth About Chocolate and Migraines



Barbara Brody

I've always heard that chocolate was a migraine trigger, so I was surprised when Dr. Audrey Halpern, clinical assistant professor of neurology at New York University School of Medicine, said that it might be safe for the migraine-prone to eat it. Apparently many headache specialists, including Dr. Halpern, believe that chocolate doesn't *cause* migraines but rather that craving chocolate might simply *indicate* that a migraine is on it's way.

"Some people have physiological cravings for chocolate anywhere from 4-24 hours before their migraine," she explains. "Because of that association, people often assume that it triggers the attack—but in reality it may be your body attempting to treat a migraine before it even begins. Caffeine, which is present in chocolate, actually gets rid of migraines when used sparingly."

Dr. Halpern doesn't recommend intentionally eating lots of chocolate to prevent an attack, since that could backfire. "You have to find your own sweet spot, if you will. If you're under a lot of stress and not sleeping well, then you may want to decrease or eliminate your chocolate intake for a while," she says. "If you're more prone to headaches during certain phases of your menstrual cycle, avoid large chocolate doses during those times. Try having a few M&M's or a small piece of chocolate to satisfy the craving, rather than overdosing.... and get some sleep."

—Barbara Brody, Health Editor