Surviving Christmas and New Years With Migraines

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Tips For Coping With Migraines During the Holidays

The holidays with migraine can be a migraine-filled time. It’s a whole range of emotions mixed with travel, guests, celebrations, traditions, stress and more.

I usually have a migraine throughout the holiday season from lack of schedule and a variety of other reasons. I try to control what I can and brace myself for what I cannot.

Migraines, the Holidays and Diet

My diet is horrible during the holidays with migraine. Between baking and parties, I find I am constantly eating things I should not be.

I am triggered by so many foods and spices and find that it is difficult to eat what others have prepared. The food is always delicious and I love to eat, but am often punished with a migraine.

I am open about what foods trigger me to other guests bringing food and bring a dish that I know works best for me.

I suggest trying to eat consistently. I get triggered if I have not eaten throughout the day.

Many people skip meals before a party and end up eating more at the party and making choices that are not the wisest. Make choices of foods that have the least triggers and seem the least processed.

Is Alcohol a Trigger?

What's the connection between alcohol and migraines? I used to be able to drink a variety of beverages, and now find that so many alcoholic drinks give me a migraine. I avoid beer, red wine, champagne and dark liquor.

I find that I can tolerate vodka and clear rum the best and white wine occasionally. During the holidays, a variety of alcohol is served, and considering what you are drinking is important.

I can occasionally drink one drink and be sick, or a few and be okay. It’s all a guessing game and combined with bad eating, I am sure to get a migraine.

Drink lots of water! Water helps the body work better and dehydration is a big migraine trigger. Drink water all throughout the day to stay balanced. If alcohol is consumed, alternate drinks with water and additional water at the end of the evening should help.

The Importance of Sleep

Sleep is so important for a migraine sufferer. I need sleep to function and recover; when I am having guests at my house my sleep is off, but I politely retreat to my room when needed.

I encourage guests to make themselves at home and help themselves to what they need if I am sleeping.

When I travel it is typically worse. The uncomfortable bed, the uncomfortable temperature, the different things I wake up from and the way I feel when I wake up is always a challenge.

Being honest with your host or hostess will help you. If you need an extra blanket because you sleep cold, a fan because you get hot or extra covering on the window to prevent light, let them know!

Keeping the same bedtime and rising at the same time is important to stay on schedule. Parties stay up late and kids raise early. I try to remind myself that I need sleep to keep my stamina during the holidays and adjust accordingly.

Coping With Stress

Stress is probably the biggest trigger during the holidays for many, and can include relatives, work, money, presents, travel, health, emotions, loss and more. Stress management is needed to survive.

Deep breaths, meditations, music, art and exercise are just a few ways to deal with stress and holidays with migraine. Knowing how to calm your breathing and mind help with migraine prevention and dealing with how it affects your body.

I find that when my stress raises, I tend to ignore my other migraine triggers. I eat more, drink more, sleep less and continue the stress and migraine cycle by not dealing with my stress immediately. Stress management is crucial for enjoying the holidays.

Seeking Alone Time

Alone time is also needed to get through the holidays. This may be your time to manage your stress, and for me it is a time to relax my mind.

By taking a second away from the chaos I am able to slow down, take inventory on how I feel and manage my symptoms better.

Taking a bath, doing yoga, reading, or taking a nap are good ways to spend your alone time. All of these things will allow your body to refocus.

Prepare and Recover

It’s so hard to deal with all of these factors. I find that by preparing for a migraine I can try to give myself a fighting chance.

When I travel, I am sure to pack a lot of helpful migraine items. I pack medication (preventative and abortive), sinus medication for weather and allergy change, essential oils, sunglasses, hat, a large water bottle, a pillow, eye mask and headphones. All of these items are helpful in fighting the circumstances I may run into.

Overall, preparing and recovering for and from the holidays is my only defense for the things I cannot control. I cannot control the weather and hormones, but have some control on stress, sleep, diet and schedule.

The things I have some control over still sneak in and give me a migraine. Combined with other triggers even the slightest mistake can result in a migraine. I do my best to control and make the best decisions that are available to me.

In summary, finding a way to enjoy the holidays with migraine is difficult. Be mindful of how you act, what you eat and where you go. Control what you can, be prepared what you cannot and enjoy the little things! Happy Holidays and enjoy!