

WELLNESS

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How to tell you're about to get a migraine – and how to know what caused it

dpa/The Tribune Content Agency

You only need to suffer from a few bad headaches before you start to wonder: Are these perhaps migraines, and not just lack of caffeine or stress headaches?

Around 40% of the population are believed to suffer from some kind of headache disorder, and while the exact cause of migraines is unknown, much is known about the symptoms and how individual episodes can be triggered.

TYPICAL MIGRAINE SYMPTOMS

Migraines are a neurological disorder and can begin in childhood.

- It presents as recurrent attacks of headache, often, though not always, on one side of the head.
- The pain is described as dull and throbbing; with physical exertion it becomes more stabbing and pounding in



ALEXANDER HEINL dpa/TNS

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- Nausea, vomiting and hypersensitivity to light, noise and sometimes smells are common.

- Those affected also have a strong need for rest.

In adults, symptoms without treatment typically last several

hours and up to a maximum of three days. Longer-lasting attacks are rare.

Women are up to three times more frequently affected than men. Migraine most often begins at puberty and peaks between ages 35 and 45. After age 50, attacks often become milder and less frequent.

WHAT IS A MIGRAINE AURA?

Around 15% to 25% of patients report aura symptoms before the headache attack, including:

- Visual disturbances with flickering vision
- Visual field defects (parts of the field of view appear missing or blurred)
- Sensory disturbances on one side of the body
- Speech disturbances

HOW ARE MIGRAINES TREATED?

- If a migraine attack persists, standard painkillers in

combination with anti-nausea medication can help.

- There are also prescription medicines (triptans), which should be taken only on a doctor's advice.
- All medications work best if taken at the start of an attack.
- They must not be taken too frequently or over long periods, as this could worsen and perpetuate migraine. Experts recommend not taking painkillers or migraine medication on more than 10 days per month.

WHAT CAUSES MIGRAINES?

The exact reasons why some people suffer from migraines and others don't remain elusive to science, however it is believed that they are caused by the release of pain-producing inflammatory substances around nerves and blood vessels in the head.

Studies show beneficial effects from regular endurance exercise and muscle relaxation techniques. When it comes to specific episodes, many patients also report common migraine triggers, such as:

- Alcohol
- Sleep deprivation
- Skipping meals
- Inadequate fluid intake
- Stress

Adjusting behavior in these areas can generally reduce the number of migraine attacks, health experts say.



TOBIAS HASE dpa/TNS

Maintaining gym consistency after the New Year hype fades requires strategies that transform motivation into a lasting habit.

Tips for staying consistent with the gym

dpa/The Tribune Content Agency

At the start of January, many of us are fueled by New Year's resolutions and hit the gym with enthusiasm and energy. However, as the months roll on, it's completely natural for that initial surge of motivation to fade.

The reasons why this happens is multifactorial says Dr Robin Chatterjee, consultant in musculoskeletal, sports and exercise medicine at the Chelsea Out-patient Centre, part of HCA Healthcare UK.

"First of all, the idea of completely changing your lifestyle from doing no exercise and eating a lot to suddenly going to the gym regularly might sound good, but the reality is that it requires commitment, time and money," reflects Chatterjee.

"Secondly, we are still in winter and the weather is dark, cold and miserable, so the motivation to get out of the house and go to the gym might not be there.

"Also, once people break one resolution, they tend to break all of them."

To help you bounce back from

this, here are some useful tips on how to stay consistent, safe and motivated in your gym workouts for the rest of 2026.

SEEK PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Don't be afraid to seek support. Professionals such as personal trainers are there to help you work towards those long-term goals and can help you stay on track.

"Instead of going to the gym and just randomly using the machines without knowing what you are doing, I would recommend seeking advice from a medical professional or a personal trainer who can make sure that you are doing the exercises in a safe manner," recommends Chatterjee. "They can also help you set up a plan of goal-directed exercises and support you through that."

SLOWLY IMPLEMENT PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD

"Doing too much too soon can have consequences," warns Chatterjee. "This is an extreme example, but if you want to run a marathon and start from doing absolutely nothing and then run

your heart out, you're likely to get some sort of strain or tear because your body isn't used to doing that amount of exercise."

Instead, he recommends implementing progressive overload gradually.

"Start off with a low weight that you're comfortable with and increase the number of sets and reps with that and then you should start notice incremental increases in your strength," advises Chatterjee.

FOCUS ON YOUR TECHNIQUE

"If you don't use weights or the machines in the right way, then you're likely to get an injury, so I would recommend seeking advice and sticking to one routine and perfecting your technique and then slowly building up what you're doing from there," advises Chatterjee.

FOCUS ON THE MENTAL BENEFITS INSTEAD OF FIXATING ON THE AESTHETICS

"Don't expect to get big muscles very quickly, because going to the gym is all about the long game," says Chatterjee. "You

won't physically feel any different for a long period of time, but you should start to feel mentally and emotionally better straight away as a result of the endorphin rush that you get from exercising."

MAKE YOUR TRAINING VARIED AND SOCIAL

"When we do things in groups or in pairs, we tend to be more successful in our outcomes and than if we're doing it individually, so I would recommend going to a class or getting your friends or family involved," suggests Chatterjee. "Having somebody to keep track of what you're doing and to cheer you on can be really helpful."

REMEMBER TO HAVE REST DAYS

"A rest period is really important," says Chatterjee. "If you do too much too soon, you're going to end up with an injury. Whereas if you do it in a tailored, structured manner with appropriate rest periods, while still maintaining a regular amount of strength training, that's going to be your best chance of success."

TRY TO GO TO THE GYM AT OFF-PEAK HOURS

"To avoid the busy crowds, consider maybe going to the gym early in the morning or late at night or during school time if you can when there will be less people there," suggests Chatterjee. "Or maybe change the particular gym that you go to, to one that's less heavily populated."

FOCUS ON THE HEALTH BENEFITS

"Apart from building strength, going to the gym is great for our overall health," says Chatterjee. "Think about the energy you're burning, and the positive impacts it's having on your blood pressure, cholesterol and your mental health."

REMEMBER THAT THE GYM IS FOR EVERYONE

"There's often this assumption that the gym is full of beefy guys and gym bunnies, but the reality is that lots of different people go to the gym," says Chatterjee. "Lots of elderly people, women, kids and people who that aren't particularly in shape go to the gym because we all need to be exercising. Gyms are designed for people from any walks of life."