



MIGRAINE WORLD SUMMIT

Migraine Trigger Guide:

Weather

Explanation

Weather and barometric changes can be an underestimated yet powerful migraine trigger for many people.

Some studies suggest that migraine attacks triggered by weather changes have been reported in over half of those with migraine.

Trigger causes

A recent study found the one constant in weather-triggered migraine was “change.”

For instance, even though the heat, high humidity or a storm can cause the attack in some people, it’s usually the *change* in temperature, humidity or barometric pressure that brings on a migraine attack in most cases.

- Temperature change (hot or cold)
- Barometric pressure
- Humidity or rain
- Precipitation
- Sunlight
- Winds
- Seasonal fluctuations

A statement by Bigal et al. spoke to change as a trigger:

“We’re realizing more and more that change – or fluctuation – is a major factor in migraine triggers, whether it’s a change in sleep patterns, estrogen levels or weather... That’s because the brains of migraine sufferers are extremely sensitive and stimulation that has no effect on most people can trigger migraines in those prone to them.”¹

¹ Bigal, Marcel, MD. Prince, P.B. et.al. “Migraines Often Triggered By Change In the Weather.” 46th Annual Scientific Meeting of the American Headache Society. 2004.



The most common weather change that patients report as a cause is rapidly falling atmospheric pressure, which is typically seen when a storm is coming.

How do you know if this is an issue?

If you find that your migraine attacks coincide with weather or seasonal changes, then weather may be a trigger.

The best way to know for sure is by keeping a migraine journal or diary.

Options to try

Many people think that attacks triggered by weather changes cannot be avoided or prevented. This isn't necessarily accurate.

Many have discovered that once they find treatments that are effective in preventing migraine attacks brought on by other triggers, they also have fewer migraine attacks from changes in weather.

Others have found that they can avoid these migraine attacks by taking an extra dose of one of their preventives when they know weather changes are coming. Still others have found that if they take a dose of their regular abortive medication when weather changes are coming, they can avoid a migraine attack. For these people, being aware of the weather forecast is important.

If you experience attacks triggered by changes in weather, it's well worth talking with your doctor about options to prevent them. Not everyone will be successful, but many will be.

Watch-outs

Weather triggers can lead people to think they're having sinus headaches instead of recognizing them as migraine. Symptoms that lead them to think they're having sinus headaches include nasal congestion, pressure or pain in the forehead or below the eyes, and red and puffy eyes. All of these can be migraine symptoms resulting from inflammation of the trigeminal nerve, which occurs during a migraine.

One study showed that up to 90% of people who self-diagnose with sinus headaches actually have migraine. The study also showed that many people are misdiagnosed with sinus headaches. Of the 100 participants in the study, all of them had seen more than four doctors and had gone an average of 25 years before receiving the correct diagnosis or significant relief.²

² Eross, E. Dodick, DW. Gladstone, J.P. 46th Annual Scientific Meeting of the American Headache Society. June, 2004.