Skipping meals leads to headaches? [1]

Dear Alice,

Why do I get severe headaches when I skip a meal?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Without knowing your health history or your lifestyle habits, it is difficult to know which one of the many possible physiological explanations is the cause of your headaches. However, research has shown that there is a significant connection between food, or lack thereof, and headaches and migraines. Some common reasons why people get headaches from skipping meals are:

**Hypoglycemia** This basically means low blood sugar. By skipping a meal your blood sugar levels may drop to a level that causes your body to release hormones that are compensating for depleted glucose levels, this in turn can cause an increase in blood pressure and can narrow your arteries. The result can be headaches and migraines.

**Dehydration** Not drinking enough fluids can cause the constriction of the meninges, which are thin layers, or several thin layers, of tissue that line your brain and spinal cord. They constrict from lack of hydration, and because the meninges have pain receptors, this causes headaches. This is often what happens after a long night of drinking and is also known as the morning after hang over.

**Caffeine** This is a common stimulant that has been linked to headaches. Going through caffeine withdrawals can cause your arteries to dilate and can create an excessive blood flow to the head, and you guessed it, can cause headaches.

You can prevent or combat the causes of these headaches by drinking enough water (it does a body good), eating smaller meals four to six times a day, and moderating your intake of caffeine. If you're often too busy to sit down for a meal, you may want to try carrying around snacks with you to hold you over until you're able to have something more substantive. In addition to snacks, having a refillable bottle for water makes it more convenient to stay hydrated and saves you money since you won't have to buy bottled water.

What it comes down to is this? your body is telling you something when you skip meals. You may want to try out the suggestions listed above and see if the frequency of headaches decreases. You may not only prevent the onset of headaches, but also find that you feel more
energetic and healthy overall.

Alice!
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