Treating Chronic Headaches and Migraines

Treatment for chronic daily headaches aims to cut the frequency of headaches so that they become intermittent and manageable. Those who aren’t overusing painkillers start with a headache prevention regimen. Currently, there aren’t any FDA–approved therapies specifically designed to ease chronic daily headache, but another strategy for chronic migraine has shown promising results.

If your headaches are complicated by medication overuse, the first step is stopping the drugs. Doctors say going “cold turkey” (quitting abruptly) works best, but another option is to gradually wean yourself off the painkillers by cutting back a little each day. If you find the headache pain unbearable or if you experience nausea, vomiting, and severe muscle pain in the neck and shoulder areas, other medications ease the withdrawal process.

If you have been taking frequent high doses of medications containing opioids or barbiturates, the withdrawal process is likely to be more difficult, as these medications can cause a physical dependency. With barbiturates, for instance, it’s best to gradually taper the medication to prevent seizures. Likewise, withdrawal from opioid dependency requires close medical supervision and you may even need to be hospitalized briefly.

Source: CNNHealth.com
What you need to stay healthy this winter

Health remedies for winter - we are in the middle of one the worst flu seasons of this century, and many are stressed about how to protect themselves. The cold and flu are bad enough while they are happening, but what most people don’t know is that they can have can lasting effects. Your immune system launched an inflammatory storm to fight off the invaders. Just 2 weeks of this total-body-inflammation—which is the time it takes to recover from a bad cold or flu---can increase your long term risk of heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

Good news we’ve got something for you: a custom plan for staying well and, if you do fall ill, for bouncing back fast. Stock up on these items to help stay healthy all winter long.

The flu can hit with the speed and fury of a UFC fighter. So if you wake up feeling like you’ve been pummeled. Ask your doctor ASAP about a prescription antiviral med, such as Tamiflu or Relenza. They work best within 24 to 48 hours of the onset of symptoms. These drugs won’t eliminate all symptoms, but they lessen their severity and reduce recovery time by 1to 2 days. Note: your doctor may advise sticking to OTC options, since overprescribing of antivirals could cause drug resistance.

While you’re sick- keep your nose clean. When flu patients squirted a saline solution into their nostrils three times a day for 8 days, they recovered about 2 days faster, a recent study from China found. Why? Nasal irrigation many rinse out the virus as well as inflammatory molecules. Use a saline solution, such as Nasal Care. But be careful –two deaths have been linked to irrigation with amoeba-contaminated neti pots. Use only distilled water or H2O you boiled first. When you’re done, clean the container with fresh disinfected water and let it air dry.

Before you’re sick – You’re not a surgeon but you should wash your hands like one: Scrub with soap and warm water for 20 seconds, and dry your hands for 20 seconds with paper towel or clean hand towel-not a hot –air dryer, which can actually increase the germs count. A 2012 study in the Journal Prevention Medicine found that people who washed their hands at least five times a day were 35 percent less likely to catch the flu than those who lathered up less. Don’t bother with antimicrobial soaps. The standard stuff is just as good.

Take the D train to Wellville. People with low circulating levels of vitamin D may have impaired infection-fighting responses because their blood has less of the virus-killing compound cathelicidin, say researchers in Spain. A shortage of sunlight from October through March means your body may be unable to manufacture enough D on its own. So during the cold-weather months supplement your diet each day with 600 to 2,000 IU of vitamin D3.

Start a pillow fight with the flu. That’s because sleep helps maintain levels of B cells and T cells, which trigger the immune response when receiving the vaccine. Moist air fights inflammation in your sinuses and can kill airborne flu virus particles, a Harvard Study found. Shoot for humidity level of 40to 60 percent.

The best cough syrup comes in a bear-shaped bottle. Honey quells meds, a Penn State study found. Nerves that control coughing may interact with brain regions that detect sweetness. The taste of honey may calm the part of the brain that makes you cough. The viscosity of honey helps coat your throat. Swallow 2 teaspoons every 4 to 5 hours during the day and half before going to bed.

continued
What you need to stay healthy this winter (cont.)

There’s nothing subtle about garlic, including its effect on viral invaders. In a new study in Clinical Nutrition, people who took a daily garlic supplement for 30 months experienced 21 percent fewer cold symptoms than those on a placebo. Credit garlic’s ability to prime natural killer cells and T cells—both part of your immune first line of defense—to respond faster and with more force when viruses attack... You don’t have to eat a clove of garlic. Just pop a supplement that contains 2.6 grams extract every day.

The Brits know what they’re doing with their 4p.m. ritual. In fact, a U.K. study found that cold sufferers who slowly sipped a hot beverage for 10 minutes saw drastic reduction in coughing, sore throat, runny nose, and sneezing. Warm drastic reductions drinks soothe the mucous membranes in your nose, mouth, and throat, reducing irritation. Your tea should be hot, but not too hot—you don’t cause inflammation. Add honey and lemon: The sweetness and acidity can stimulate salivation to clear your throat and sinuses.

Create some calm before the storm. Stress triggers production of the hormone Cortisol, elevating inflammation and priming you for more severe symptoms if you catch a cold. In British study, the upper respiratory infections of people who stewed over stressful events were more severe than those of people who didn’t dwell. Instead of fretting over your hectic holiday schedule, create daily to-do lists—a more emotionally neutral task.

Sync with zinc, Zinc lozenges may reduce the duration of the common cold, a new Canadian review concludes. As soon as your throat feels scratchy—often the first sign of a cold—start sucking on Zinc acetate lozenges, such as Zicam. This is the form of the metal most effective at fighting colds, say researchers in Finland Aim for 75 milligrams a day, but don’t go overboard. Limit yourself to one lozenge every few hours for a few days. Regular use for 6 weeks or longer could lead to nerve damage.

Source: CNNHealth.com
Influenza (Flu)

This season a total of 2,902 flu cases have been reported to all El Paso Department of Health (from October through the third week in January 2013).

Flu is a serious contagious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes death. In 2009-2010, a new very different flu virus called “2009 H1N1” spread worldwide causing the first pandemic in more than 40 years. Flu is unpredictable, but the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) expects the 2009 H1N1 virus to spread along with other seasonal flu viruses.

How does Flu spread?
Most experts think that flu viruses are spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or nose of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. A person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own eyes, mouth or nose.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick from flu?
CDC recommends a three-step approach to fighting the flu: vaccination, everyday preventive actions, and the correct use of antiviral drugs if your doctor recommends them.

Take flu antiviral drugs if your doctor prescribes them.
Antiviral drugs work best when started in the first 2 days of symptoms to treat people who are sick (such as those who are hospitalized) or people who are sick with the flu symptoms and who are at increased risk of severe flu illness.

What should I do if I get sick?
If you become ill with influenza symptoms you should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to seek medical care. Most people are able to recover at home from flu without medical care. However, some people are at greater risk of serious flu-related complications. They are:
• Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
• People 65 and older
• Pregnant women
• People who have existing medical conditions

The Department continues to recommend vaccinations as well as the four C’s to prevent further illness in our community:
CLEAN - Wash your hands often. Scrub your hands for least 20 seconds with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
COVER - Cover your cough. Use a tissue to cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
CONTAIN - Contain germs by steering clear of others who are sick. If you do get sick, stay home until you’re well, not to spread more germs.
CALL - Call or see your doctor if you or your child has a fever greater than 100 degrees.

Source: www.elpasocountyhealth.org/flu-prevention