Sometimes you know exactly what's causing that pounding in your skull. Other times, you're blindsided. Outwit these unexpected pain triggers, from bright lights to bad weather.

Headaches, whether debilitating migraines or less-painful but still annoying tension headaches, are often set off or made worse by a key trigger.

In certain cases headaches can be a sign or symptom of a more serious health problem, if symptoms persistent please seek help with a trained healthcare professional.

Read on to learn about some of the most common headache triggers and how you can get rid of your headaches for good.
**Stress**

Stress is the root cause of many of the health problems we face today. One of the reasons is because stress leads to fluctuations in the hormones cortisol and adrenaline. Under short term situations these fluctuations are managed by our bodies but when we are faced with chronic stress, these changes become more serious. It has been estimated that stress accounts for 80% of all migraines. Stress can also make you clench your jaw and neck muscles, causing neck pain that, in turn, can set off tension headaches.

Solution: Meditation, deep breathing, yoga, and massage can help. Or consider a mind-body technique called biofeedback. Certain adaptogenic herbs like Ashwagandha and Rhodiola have been shown to decrease cortisol levels and help the body handle stressful situations.

**Hormones**

The dip in estrogen that occurs just before your period can lead to migraines. Similar hormonal fluctuations can also trigger headaches during pregnancy, perimenopause, and menopause.

Solution: Certain adaptogenic herbs like Maca, Ashwagandha, and Rhodiola have been shown to balance hormones, and may be useful when dealing with headaches triggered by hormones. Consult your doctor before taking any supplements, if pregnant.

**Weather**

Migraine sufferers may be more likely to be hit when temperatures are high, according to a study in the Journal of Neurology. Shifts in barometric pressure (the density of the air in the atmosphere) may lead to sinus headaches, too.

Solution: Do your best to avoid the other headache triggers on hot days, or when the weather pattern is shifting dramatically
Poor Sleep

Poor sleep is one of the worst causes of stress on the body, and will lead to changes in hormone levels. Specifically, increased cortisol and decreased serotonin. Serotonin causes blood vessels in the brain to dilate and activate the trigeminal nerve, the main nerve involved in migraines, leading to inflammation and the release of pain-causing chemicals.

Solution: Make sleep a priority. Research shows that although we can get by on less than 8 hours of sleep a night. We function and feel better when we get the right amount of quality sleep, for most of us that is an undisturbed 8 hours.

Strong Scents

"The trigeminal nerve has projections in the lining of the nose," Dr. Grosberg explains. When you detect a noxious smell, the nerve can release substances involved in producing headaches.

Solution: Avoid using perfume or scented products; soaps, shampoos, cleaning supplies, candles, etc.

Intense Lighting

Bright light from fluorescent bulbs, computer glare, or even the sun, can set off a headache.

Solution: If possible, switch from fluorescent lights to softer incandescent bulbs. Turn down the brightness on your TV, computer, and smart phone, and more importantly minimize your “screen time”.
Diet

There are three substances that are the most likely offenders to cause blood vessels to constrict and then expand, causing migraines:

1. Foods that contain the amino acid tyramine
   - Red wine
   - Aged cheese

2. Foods that contain nitrates
   - Hot dogs
   - Deli cold cuts
   - And other processed meats

3. Foods that contain amino acid phenylalanine
   - Chocolate
   - Artificial sweetener
   - Soy products

Skipping meals can also trigger headaches, because it leads to fluctuations in blood sugar.

Solution: Figure out if you are sensitive to any of the common food triggers. Eat, and drink water regularly. Decrease your overall sugar intake to improve your body’s ability to manage it’s blood sugar levels.

Overall Health & Fitness

In a study, researchers found that obese women (a body mass index of 30) had a 35% greater risk of headaches than those with a lower BMI. Severe obesity (BMI of 40) upped the chances to 80%.

A Swedish study showed that those who were inactive were more likely to get headaches than those who worked out.

Solution: Get active. Warning - if you are very out of shape or sensitive to headaches, exercise can initially be a trigger. You may need to start slowly and reduce other common triggers, then work up to it.
Spinal Alignment & Posture

The Nervous System is a very important and delicate system regarding your overall health and function. Made up of the brain, spinal cord, and spinal nerves it controls every cell tissue, and organ of your body. The spinal cord and nerves run right down the centre of your spine and branch off to the organs and tissues of the body through holes between the spinal bones. Throughout life, most people have had several accidents or injuries strong enough to effect the position and function of the spinal bones. Compound that with hours of repetitive movements and sitting and standing throughout our days that can lead to enough of a spinal problem and begin to trigger headaches. When the spinal bones are exposed too much, or to intense physical injury they become locked and displaced which affects the nerves coming out of the side. If those are the nerves going to the head it can trigger headaches.

Headaches, including migraines, are one of the most common conditions regularly managed by chiropractors. At the time I conducted this research, over 255 peer-reviewed articles referenced chiropractic’s ability to help cure, prevent and ease the burden of headaches and migraines in people all across the globe.

Compared to most medical treatments, few interventions can initiate headache relief like chiropractic adjustments can.

Solution: Have a consultation with a chiropractor to see if they can help.