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The City of London Migraine Clinic Newsletter

JANUARY 2011

First of all we would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year. It is always refreshing to start a clean slate and we hope that this year will be a successful one for the Clinic and all it's supporters. Whether you have made any New Year's resolutions or not, we have a few suggestions in this month's article that might encourage a few lifestyle changes for a healthier, happier new you!

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1. Eat Well, Be Well

Slow release foods & the importance of regular healthy snacking, Dr J. Horti

It is known that the most important dietary trigger for migraine is lack of food. It is thought a relative fall in blood sugar (or glucose) is the culprit. One of the most beneficial lifestyle changes we migraineurs can make is to ensure we follow a way of eating that maintains blood sugar levels and avoids sudden dips. So how is this possible?

All foods that we eat get absorbed into the blood stream and cause our blood sugar to rise. Refined (or processed) foods cause a sudden rise in sugar levels and then a quick fall. These foods include white bread, sugary biscuits and white pasta. Unrefined (or natural) foods take much longer for the body to break them down into sugar and so cause a slow rise in sugar levels. These foods are also called low glycaemic index foods and include brown rice, oat cakes and fruit. Another factor is that meals that include protein mixed with carbohydrates tend to maintain sugar levels more evenly.

So how can we apply this practically? I advise my patients to always eat their breakfast within an hour of getting up, not after a long commute, the school run or a visit to the gym. Having a mixture of protein and a good carbohydrate is the ideal, for example muesli with nuts and yoghurt, or protein (baked beans, eggs or peanut butter) on wholemeal toast. A small snack mid morning will maintain your sugar levels and a piece of fruit fits the bill. Try to have lunch on time, a late lunch may mean a migraine later on in the day. A bowl of vegetable soup or a jacket potato with tuna and salad are good examples. For many of us the gap between lunch and our evening meal is long, bridge this gap with a snack of a handful of unsalted nuts, some dried fruit or hummus with vegetables.



Choose your carbohydrates wisely in the evening, opt for wholemeal pasta, lentils or brown rice. I also advise that you have a small snack just before bedtime. Remember overnight is the longest you go without eating and the reason why many migraines start early morning. An ideal snack would be a yoghurt or small bowl of an oat based cereal.

Maintaining blood sugar levels is particularly important for children and teenagers. Their busy school and social schedules often result in skipped meals, inadequate food intake and a reliance on fast foods which can trigger a migraine. Encourage frequent snacking (good quality cereal bars and dried fruit are perfect since it does not matter if they get squashed in the depths of the school bag!) , this is particularly important before and after games and PE.

The good news is that sticking to this type of eating has other benefits, it maintains your energy levels, combats fatigue and might even help you shed a few pounds. There is also evidence that a low glycaemic index diet will reduce your risk of diabetes and heart disease. So follow the well know sayings; eat little and often and eat naturally and you won't be going too far wrong!

2. Thank you

We would like to say a big thank you to the South London Jazz Orchestra and Incredible Sax band for their wonderfully festive performance at Borough Market at the end of December. In total they raised £308.85 for the clinic with the help of the bucket shakers below! They have also kindly offered to play again next year, so we will look forward to it.



Rebecca and Ciara collecting for the Clinic at Borough Market

3. Research

New Studies

If you haven't already been in touch, do let us know if you are interested in having your name on our research database. You will be the first to hear when we need people for new studies! Alison Frith our Clinical Research Sister can be contacted via email at research@migraineclinic.org.uk or telephone her direct line 020 7251 8094.

Is the cure for menstrual migraine in our genes?

Our genetics research is ongoing. We are still looking for women who have menstrual migraine (with three months of diaries showing migraine and periods) and also women who are lucky enough not to have migraine at all. Contact Alison by email if you think you can help. This is a simple study which only involves visiting the Clinic to complete a questionnaire and provide a saliva sample. We can help with travel expenses if required.

4. Funding Update

We are pleased to report that we have received grants for a project that we have been trying to fund for a long while. The Vintners Livery Company kindly granted us £4,000 after they visited the Clinic in December and saw our needs first hand. We have also just found out that thanks to your votes we have won £3,000 from the local Natwest Community Fund. These grants will be used to upgrade our outdated phone system, providing direct lines to individuals at the Clinic and allowing us to provide an overall more efficient service to all who contact the Clinic.

If you hear of any grants or charity competitions such as the one set up by NatWest please let us know. Any funds towards updating the Clinic and securing our future whether big or small make a huge difference.

5. Fundraising Ideas

Run for the Clinic

Thank you to those that responded so enthusiastically to the suggestion of running for us as mentioned in last month's newsletter. We have done some research and there are still

places available for both the 10k Great Manchester Run on 15th May 2011 which is televised live on BBC and the Great South Run, a 10 mile road race in Portsmouth on 30th October 2011. Please get in touch as soon as possible if you are interested as both runs have a minimum number of place that we can secure as a charity.

Charity Cycle

On the theme of getting fit for the New Year, we are also considering the option of a sponsored Cycle ride. People have shown an interest in one Coast to Coast route following the National Cycle Network from the Irish Sea to the North Sea. It involves a picturesque journey on quiet country lanes and, cycleways and paths through the Lake District, Cumbria and the North Pennines. It ends a rather saddle-sore 140 miles later in Tynemouth after passing over Newcastle's Millenium Bridge!

The ride is suitable for beginners and is described as Gentle to Moderate. We would aim to complete it in four days, over a weekend. It would be a great way to meet others who support the Clinic whilst fighting that Christmas bulge so if you would like to take part please get in touch.

Other cycle ride options are the famous one day London to Brighton route or if you are feeling brave, the Land's End to John O'Groats would be an amazing feat. However we are open to any other suggestions that you may have.



Please call 0207 251 3322 or email info@migraineclinic.org.uk for more information or to register your interest.

Calling all Irish Supporters!

For anyone reading this who lives in Ireland you might like to know that the only Irish owned independent Network 'JUST Mobile' gives one cent of every minute of every call to a charity of your choice. You can apply for a Free SIM for "Ireland's cheapest mobile network" at www.justmobile.ie. It gives a new meaning to the phrase "It's good to talk!"