

## **QA 12 – Migraine Trigger Foods**

### **QUESTION:**

A grandmother called me inquiring about foods that may contribute to migraine headaches in her 8 year old granddaughter. She was seen at a pediatric hospital and evaluated for food allergies as well as other medical problems that could manifest in migraine headaches. The grandmother reports that no problems were found. The parents are eliminating certain foods (she couldn't tell me which ones) to see if that made a difference.

The child apparently has frequent and bad migraine headaches; she eats foods typical for an eight year old. She had to discontinue her participation in dance classes because of her headaches. The grandmother wanted specific information on foods that may exacerbate migraines in children. Are there any?

### **ANSWER:**

Food allergy and migraine headache literature sometimes produces more questions than answers. More than likely, the foods being eliminated from this child's diet are: wheat, corn, milk and egg as these are the most frequently listed group of foods recommended in the literature for elimination diets for migraines. However, if the child was skin or RAST tested for food allergies and the tests came back negative, it is difficult to justify such a restricted diet.

There is, however, some literature on Food Sources of Migraine "Triggers" or "Incriminated Agents in Dietary Migraine". They are as follows:

Tyramine (found in aged cheeses, processed & fermented sausages, sour cream, wine, pickled herring, smoked fish, avocado, chicken liver, vinegar, peanut); Phenylethylamine (found in chocolate, aged cheese, red wine); Phenolic flavanoids, ethanol, Nitrites (cured meats), Caffeine, Monosodium glutamate, & Aspartame.

Most of the recommendations from the allergy literature are for an elimination diet of the suspected triggers for two to four weeks and re-challenge.

References:

- 1) Joneja, Janice, Ph.D., Dietary Management of Food Allergies and Intolerances, Hall Publications, Canada, 1998.
- 2) Metcalfe, Sampson, Simon, Food Allergy: Adverse Reactions to Foods and Food Additives, Blackwell Science, 1997.