

## Vitamin B and folic acid 'help fight migraines'

Vitamin B and folate supplements could be the key to fighting the debilitating symptoms of migraines, according to new research.

By Bonnie Malkin in Sydney

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They "significantly" reduced the frequency and severity of attacks in a clinical trial involving 50 migraine sufferers.

Professor Lyn Griffiths, director of the Genomics Research Centre (GRC) at Griffith University in Australia, said the results of the six-month study were very positive.

The findings showed "a drastic improvement in headache frequency, pain severity and associated disability for those treated," she said.

Migraines cause severe headaches and can also trigger nausea, vomiting,

pins and needles and increased sensitivity to bright light, sound or smell. A typical attack can last from four to 72 hours and can be so debilitating that the sufferer is unable to work, and in some cases, even to leave a darkened room.

Approximately nine million people in the UK suffer from migraines, which is by far the most common neurological condition. About 80 per cent of those - some 7.2 million - have an attack at least once a month.

Migraines are often treated with powerful painkillers such as codeine or anti sickness medication. Preventative treatment includes anti depressants and drugs commonly used to control blood pressure such as betablockers.

Previous studies by the GRC identified a gene, known as MTHFR, which makes people susceptible to migraine attacks when it mutates or disfunctions.

This results in higher levels of the amino acid homocysteine, which is linked to an increased risk of stroke and other coronary diseases.

"The recent trial was founded on the theory that vitamin B supplements and folic acid will reduce the homocysteine and in turn, improve migraine symptoms," Prof Griffiths said.

The success of the trial proved that "safe, inexpensive" supplements - rather than expensive medication that can have adverse side effects - could treat migraine patients, she said.

The team is now preparing to conduct a larger trial to determine the best dosage for individual patients, depending on their genetic profile.



Vitamin B and folic acid 'help fight migraines' Photo: GETTY

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