



## June is Brain Awareness Month

Learning about headaches and migraines is one of the first steps you can take to address head pain. Nearly everyone has had a headache at some point in their lives. There are more than 200 types of headaches, but the majority are tension and migraine headaches. Up to 1 in 20 adults experiences a headache every day or almost every day. Tension headaches, the most common type of headache, are usually treatable with over-the-counter medication containing ibuprofen or acetaminophen. Migraines, the more serious type of headache, impact more than 37 million men, women, and children in the United States. For more than 90% of those affected, migraines interfere with education, careers, and social activities. Symptoms can be debilitating, ranging from intense head pain to nausea, vomiting, and fatigue.

Click on the links below for more information on headaches and migraines.

[The Complete Headache Chart](#): Headaches can be triggered by environmental and wellness factors which require different treatments.

The most common causes of headaches include:

- Alcohol consumption
- Skipping meals
- Dehydration
- Stress and anxiety
- Lack of sleep
- Overusage of medicine

[Excusing Yourself](#): Migraines cause debilitating effects on a person which can result in the inability to function both in social and work environments.

Although migraines are not fully understood, researchers are aware of a number of migraine triggers which include the common causes listed above as well as the following:

- Hormonal changes in women
- Too much caffeine
- Bright lights and sun glare, strong smells, loud sounds
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Changes in weather or barometric pressure
- Processed foods and food additives

What lifestyle changes can help minimize headaches and migraines?

- Regular and consistent cardiovascular exercise
- Healthy, nutritious, and regular meals and snacks (no meal skipping)
- Adequate hydration (over six 8-ounce glasses of water per day)
- Limiting caffeine
- Mindfulness exercises to decrease stress
- Adequate sleep
- Going to bed and waking up at the same time on a consistent basis

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If you want to engage in healthy brain activities to improve your overall brain function, you should try making changes to your lifestyle.

**Consider these tips to boost your brain power:**

1. Keep learning – Challenging your brain with mental exercise can help stimulate brain cells. Try a new hobby or learn a new skill.
2. Eat healthy – Studies have shown that a Mediterranean Diet rich in antioxidants, monounsaturated fats, and omega-3 fats, can improve brain function. The diet includes a high intake of plant foods, fish, poultry, and other lean meats, moderate alcohol intake (wine in particular), and plenty of extra virgin olive oil. This month, the Benefits Department offers two webinars on the Mediterranean Diet (see Webinar section below).
3. Read books – Reading requires you to use various parts of your brain and gives your brain a good workout. This stress-reducing activity can improve memory and lead to better sleep.
4. Socialize (from a distance!) – Being social can help you stay mentally sharp.
5. Reduce stress – Stress affects how your brain functions. Not only does it affect your memory, but it promotes inflammation in your body.
6. Get a good night's sleep – Studies have shown that sleep plays a key role in removing toxins in your brain and leads to improvements in cognition. On the other hand, sleep deprivation can exacerbate stress. Try improving your sleep habits so you can improve your ability to concentrate, both at home and at work.

Spreading awareness of important health topics continues to be our top priority. Toward that end, the Archdiocese of Boston Benefits Department offers the resources below.

## Wellness Webinars

These webinars are available to all employees and their family members. Employees and spouses enrolled in one of the Archdiocese of Boston Health Plans will earn double the normal \$20 (so \$40) into their Health Equity HRA accounts for attending each webinar. Even if you have already reached your 750 HRA point maximum for the current Plan Year, we will award points for your attendance at each webinar.

### **The Power of the Plant Based Diet - Tuesday, June 9 at 12 pm**

This class is not about turning participants into vegetarians, but about educating them about the powers in plants: fiber, antioxidants, and phytochemicals to name a few. Participants will learn how these substances work, the best food sources, how much they need to consume to experience benefits, as well as creative ways to build them into an otherwise carnivorous lifestyle.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

### **Quick, Easy, Fresh: Meals in Minutes – Thursday, June 11 at 3 pm**

*New Virtual Cooking Class! Raffle prizes to be awarded!*

Participants learn how to prepare quick and easy meals, healthfully! The program includes information on how to build a heart smart pantry to prepare quick, healthy meals in minutes! Recipes and meal planning information is included.

**Featured Recipes:** Strawberry Salad with Spinach, Quinoa, Pesto, Veggie Bowl, Mixed Berries & Yogurt Frozen Treat

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

### **DASHing to Blood Pressure Reduction – Tuesday, June 16 at 12:30 pm**

Conclusive scientific medical studies have shown that the Dash Diet, in conjunction with low sodium intake, reduces blood pressure. A qualified registered dietitian will discuss the DASH Eating plan and provide information on low sodium foods to help manage high blood pressure.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

## **Mediterranean Destination – Thursday, June 18 at 3 pm**

*New Virtual Cooking Class! Raffle prizes to be awarded!*

Participants learn how to prepare quick and easy meals, healthfully...the Mediterranean Way! The program includes information on how to build a heart smart Mediterranean pantry to prepare meals in minutes! Recipes and meal planning information is included.

**Featured Recipes: Sweet orange and onion salad, Bulgur salad with chickpeas, Berries with Greek yogurt and honey.**

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

## **The Mediterranean Diet – Tuesday, June 23 at 12 pm**

Participants learn about the many health benefits of the Mediterranean diet and lifestyle. The program includes the science behind the diet plan, super foods from the region, and how to build a heart smart Mediterranean pantry to prepare quick and healthy meals in minutes.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

## **Engage in a healthy family activity and earn HRA points!**

Participate in a healthy family activity (with one or more family members) and earn \$20 HRA per activity (maximum of 5 activities per Plan Year). Even if you have already reached your 750 HRA point maximum for the current Plan Year, we will award points for your activity. Eligible activities include hiking, bike riding, attending a family picnic, etc. To self-report completion of a healthy family activity, please email Pablo Fernandez at [pfernandez@rcab.org](mailto:pfernandez@rcab.org) with basic information about the activity and date.

## **Employee Assistance Program Reminder**

Sun Life's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), powered by Guidance Resources, offers free, confidential access to a consultant for help with anxiety, stress, depression, financial challenges, and more. ComPsych GuidanceConsultants can help you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call [800-460-4374](tel:800-460-4374) to talk to a GuidanceConsultant.

To access additional information regarding our EAP benefits, visit [www.catholicbenefits.org/PDF/other\\_benefits/eap.pdf](http://www.catholicbenefits.org/PDF/other_benefits/eap.pdf)

## Other Important Dates in June

6/5, 9:30 am Open Enrollment Webinar

6/9, 4 pm Open Enrollment Webinar

6/12, 5 pm Open Enrollment ends

\* For both Open Enrollment webinars, sign up is available at [catholicbenefits.org/webinars](http://catholicbenefits.org/webinars). Content in both webinars is the same, so choose the date that works best for you.

In good health,

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Benefits Department

