Top 3 Tips For Parents Who Have Kids With Headaches Transcript

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Introduction and guest background

Hi everybody. I am Doctor Amelia Scott Barrett. I am the neurologist and headache specialist and I show people how to use functional medicine and biohacking tools to relieve their pain.

And I am here today with Doctor Allison Alford, and we are going to talk about the top three things that parents can do to help their kids with migraines.

We all know that there's oftentimes a genetic component. And so those of us adults who end up with migraines often see the same thing happening in our kids.

And that can be terrifying to what it. So Doctor Alford, thank you so much for being with us today. Can you start us off by telling us a little bit about your background and why you do what you do?

Yeah, absolutely. I'm so glad to be here. So, yeah, I'm actually, child had pediatric headache specials here in Richmond, Virginia. So I did pediatric neurology, and then I actually went and did extra studies to be a headache specialist on top of that.

So that's all I do all day. Headaches and concussions. And I opened my own practice six years ago, because I wanted to really spend time with patients, be able to educate patients, not just medicate them.

I think there's a lot with migraines and lots of headaches, actually, that we can do that is not medicinal. It's, you know, there's lifestyle changes, behavior things, and that takes time to talk and educate a patient about.

So with my own practice, I could take as much time as I wanted. I could schedule things the way I wanted. And so I opened my own office for that reason.

And I've loved every minute of it. And getting to do that for patients, it's been fantastic. I love it. That's great. Okay, so then what do you tell parents you're talking to parents and kids all day long about headaches?

What are some of these educational lifestyle pieces that you think are really important for parents to know? Some of them are really simple, silly things like hydrate.

I mean, people do never drink enough water. And kids especially does 2 to 3l a day on a regular day. And you probably tell your patients that as well.

Hydration, caffeine, and exercise basics

I mean, it's it seems simple, but it makes a huge difference in the headaches. And then watching their caffeine intake. A lot of kids are drinking the monster drinks the Celsius.

And those are not things we want them to have. Add too much caffeine or give them more headaches. And so we watch those things and getting them up and moving.

That's one of the biggest things we can do. And it is hard for kids with the workload they have at high schools now, middle school or even elementary school.

Sometimes for them to find time to be kids and go play and relax and get outside. So encouraging your kids to get up and move in whatever form they find enjoyable. If that's dancing like an idiot to the radio, like no one's watching, go for it.

But help them get off screens, get outside, get off their phone. Even for 20, 30 minutes at a time just to get up and move. That'll go a long way to helping their headaches.

So I love this idea, but I'll be honest with you, I am a mom of a teenage girl with headaches, and I try to get her to move. But, you know, there are so many barriers to it, it seems like.

I mean, it's partly what you said. Her schedule is so packed. If she has a free half hour and a night like I'm resistant, I'm just really reluctant to say, honey, do you want to come lift some weights or, you know, she's like, no.

So I, you know, it's it's just really hard to do that. Do you have any, any tips to share our strategies that, that might, that make it go over a little better with the kids or, you know, secret inside tips of the trade on how to get your teenager to move?

Absolutely. Well, one, let me say there is something to be said for balance. So, you know, if it is that one half an hour and they need to decompress, that's okay.

Like just don't beat yourself up as a parent that you didn't do every waking minute. Good point, good point. Yeah. But, you know, they're one of the gifts the pandemic gave us.

And I really think this is true is that when gyms shut down in the world, shut down exercise, had to go virtual. They didn't have a choice. And a lot of people and I'm actually a Zumba instructor, which is if I could spend all day long, I probably would.

But a lot of those people, that's my side gig for them. It's not. That's their livelihood, that's their job. And so losing the gym made a huge impact.

So everything went virtual. And so there are I mean, anything you want to try, you can probably try online. I know Zumba. Definitely went virtual. And you can dance with people from all over the world.

At any kind of any given time of day you want. And that's been helpful. I know the companies like Beachbody have virtual platforms, bar classes, yoga classes.

So again, if it's a little bit of downtime, you want them to relax, you can do yoga. And so getting access is easier. You don't have to drive to the gym and have a big weight system.

And the other thing I think as a parent that helps is workout with them.

Getting teens to move and work out together

You know, we beat ourselves up, especially as mothers all the time about spending time with our kids and working mothers. Right? We I have a business to run and I have this to do.

Not. Yeah, but if I have to workout anyway, if I do something, we both enjoy it. Now I'm spending time with my kid and we're getting healthy together.

Set goals together. And if for a while I don't know if anyone wi my family and I watch American Ninja Warrior. I know it sounds silly, but it's a lot of fun.

And I'm amazed at what these people can do with their bodies. And so we looked up a it was an at home, ninja workout. And it was basically lunges and squats and, you know, bodyweight exercises.

And I started doing it by myself just because I thought it'd be fun. And I would put on like, we set up a soundtrack of a lot of the Guardians of the Galaxy soundtrack, 2070s, like, fun music.

And my kids wanted to join in and ended up at one point, all four of my family members, we were all doing it

together and pushing each other to do more sets and do more work, and we had a blast.

Now we look forward to it. You know, Tuesday night was ninja night. And and so working out with them, I think double doubles your fun with it and makes it a little more workable.

Yeah. You know, you bring up that that is two really good points. The first point you made is fine things on line, which is so much more available now.

And that does kind of tap into their natural, screen propensity shall we say. Yeah. So I hadn't thought very much about that. That's a good tip. And yeah.

Yeah. Working out together then, you know, you're helping them in multiple ways. You're being a role model. You do get that time together like you said.

And then also they they get their workout in and mom gets their workout in or dad right. So that's kind of a win win. Yeah. Yeah okay. Sorry. I also think it helps them to to learn some time management and help that part of it.

I think that's a skill also that'll help your migraine sufferers and warriors. Is teaching them okay. Well, maybe that's not the only half an hour they could have if we work their schedule around and maybe what project they were working on here, they could figure out we could do that on Tuesday.

If we work out today and help them plan their day to plan a workout in. Also, I think would be helpful, even if it's with you or not. But you help them plan their day that will reduce their stress and help their headaches too, in addition to the exercise helping their headaches.

So sort of gives you that benefit as well. Yeah. And I really like what you're bringing up about time management. That sounds like something that's really helpful for us to coach our kids on.

Also, as parents of kids with headaches. Tell me more about that. So I it's amazing to me how much our kids do. I think it's ridiculously higher than what we did as children and how much workload they have and how many activities they're in.

And, I mean, kids are playing not just sports for their school, which is what I did, but they're playing a travel team on top of that. And, like, my daughter's a gymnast, so that's an intensive sport.

She's in the gym four days a week for hours at a time and and then has all her schoolwork to do.

Teaching time management to reduce stress

And so it's it's a lot for them to do. And we as adults adapt. Most of us, I should say, adapt. Pretty easily and doing multiple things at once and planning our day out.

Kids don't have that skill immediately, so we as parents need to teach them how to do that. And how to a lot your time. And so if you know you have a big project, don't wait until the last week, sit down in the beginning and say, okay, I'm going to work on this part.

I'm going to kind of give themselves due dates, maybe. And that doesn't get the things I'm suggested don't necessarily work for every kid. And I've had this conversation with patients trying to help, try to help them figure out how to manage their day.

And sometimes kids just don't. They're like, yeah, I can sit down and make that plan, but I'm not going to stick with it. Okay, well then we have to you have to figure out what's going work for your your child.

But helping them learn those skills so that they can multitask, as it were, when it's necessary and be able to have some downtime in their day, some fun in their day, and still get their work done without feeling stressed and

overwhelmed is a skill.

And I think that's something. As parents, we need to teach in addition to, you know, teaching them manners, they teach them life skills. And I think that that goes a long way.

Really good point. Yeah. To spend some time teaching kids time management because it's I mean, it's not like it's a natural born skill, you know? I mean, think about all the other things we teach our kids, like you were saying, and I would I would imagine that what you're really getting at when you help your kids with the skill, as you are teaching them how to manage stress, you are teaching them that, yes, I can anticipate that this part of my week is going to be hard. I'm going to chunk that up.

I'm going to do a little bit this day, a little bit that day. That day I can't do anything. All right. Well, at least if you've thought about it ahead and you're anticipating it, you're really teaching them that number one, stress will cause your headaches.

That is how you're made. And number two, you can control that. You can influence it. You don't have to be a victim of your schedule. You don't have to give up all the things you love.

You just need a new skill set right? Yeah, and I love that you use the word control because that that really part of it is stress. I took kids like my kids in high school.

I said, your stress usually gets better when you go to college. And they all look at me like, but it's more work and it's more intense, but you have more control.

Your schedule is not eight hours a day locked in a building. Do you know you have a couple classes and then if you have a headache, you can rest and then you still have time to get your work done.

It's feeling. And sometimes we have to feel control, like we have control even if we don't. And so sometimes that time management gives us that well, okay, I know I can't work on it this day, but that's okay because I have planned to work on it the next day, or I have already done some work on it before and it doesn't feel so much of a punishment that I didn't work on it that day.

And I'm going to be behind. Yeah, yeah, I love that. That's a really good idea. I would not have thought about that as being a top tip for parents who are dealing with kids with headaches, but I think you're right that that's a really good plan.

Anything else? Other tips that you recommend for your parents dealing with kids who have headaches? I mean, I think just again, teaching them ways to relax.

And I always, sometimes I wish I could tell you this is how you relax, do this. Now you gotta figure out what works for you. And the same thing. Like I said, with exercise, you got to find the thing you enjoy.

So I tell people, you know, meditation is great, and I've done it, I will, I was skeptical, I'm not gonna lie. It as a as a previous yoga devotee, I still was skeptical.

I was like, I'm really sitting still is going to do something for me. And I was I handled stress much better throughout the day. I was much calmer. My mood was much more level.

Knock a lot. But for me, like 3 to 5 minutes is as much as I could do. And then my mind starts going on. I put that down, I got put that over there and I just, I couldn't do longer.

But for some people, 20 minutes a day is the perfect thing. My husband runs, I tell you. I said I would rather you punch me in the face than run anywhere.

Like that's nasty. I have never enjoyed it. I will never enjoy it. But for him, he's like, it's me in the road. I like it, he

cannot dance.

Relaxation, listening, and connecting with kids

He would not do Zumba ever. I've tried, he won't do it. But that's my happy hour like I. And now that I'm an instructor, it's even double because I get all that joy back from the students in the class, the classroom, and, it's it's amazing.

But you have to figure out what works for you. And so whether it's relaxation or exercise, there is no one size fits all. And so figuring out what works for your child, what works for you.

And then just as part of that, you're going to listen to your kids like, sometimes what you think they need isn't what they need. And I think in the the world has gotten so fast paced, so everything's in small nuggets and or overwhelmed with information and input.

And our kids are getting that too. And I think we forget as adults a lot of times how much of the world they're absorbing and how much they are trying to process the post-pandemic world, just like we are.

And we can learn from them sometimes too, as well as help them and figure out what they need and listen to them take, you know, if it's a ten minute ride to the store and they go with you, talk to them when it's them, you see what what are they worried about?

What are they anxious about? What? What's on their mind. Not what you think should be on their mind. And you might be surprised. And then that gives you more things to help them work on.

Maybe they know, hey, I know how to schedule my day. That's not my problem. But I'm really worried about, you know, this incident I had with my good friend and I don't know how to handle it.

You know, there's lots of skills we as adults take for granted that we learned and we know how to do and how to navigate, and social situations and leadership problems and all kinds of stuff that we can help them learn as well, but also give them tools to help their stress and help their headaches.

It sounds like really what you're saying is just spend some time to connect with your kids. Meet them on on their ground, do what they want to do, you know, plug into their world so that they'll up and open up to you and connect with you.

Absolutely. I will be honest. So I don't know if how many parents will know this. I there's a game called Roblox and I'm not endorsing them at one point, but there's a game in there where you literally adopt animals.

That's lead and trade animals, adopt animals. I started playing it because my kids were playing it, and we now have the a blast sitting with each other.

And because you're in a, you're on a server together, so you all know you're in the world together and we'll trade stuff to each other and to. And what's amazing to me, it's not just the game.

We're all sitting in the room together playing right, but we're talking as we go. And so I'm getting double. I'm in the world. I'm seeing what things they're playing, what kind of experiences and what they're talking about.

But then we're also just talking like and stuff just flows because they're they're just having a good time and they're distracted. And then you'd be surprised what they open up about.

So being on their level really does make a difference. And and I I've, I've gotten slightly addicted to it. I'm not going to lie. Sometimes I play when they're not around.

But you know, but it's. Yeah I think we it's important to know what apps they're on, what they're doing and meeting

them at it. That conversation I think, is important.

So this has been a really interesting conversation. This is not what I thought you were going to say. I thought you were going to tell us all about, you know, the usual headache advice, like put your kid on magnesium and stuff like that, and you are a pediatric headache expert, and these are the nuggets that you have distilled from many years of conventional medical training and working with, you know, people for decades at a time.

So I think this is really incredibly valuable information to get out there for people. And just to sort of, summarize. So it sounds like exercise is important, releases endorphins, helps kids in so many ways.

Maybe get them signed up for something online, or maybe exercise with them, and then teaching time management skills, which is really about stress management.

How do you chunk out your time? How do you allow yourself a little bit of room in your schedule in case you do get a headache and you can't get that assignment done on a one night you have for it.

You know, you've you've learned about your body and you have learned ways to schedule your time ahead of time so that you don't get in those stressful crisis situations as much, and then just really connecting with your kids, teaching them, you know, relaxation, things like meditation or whatever, whatever they're drawn to and, and connecting with them in their world.

And I like this because these are things that all parents can do. They they're completely free. You don't have to get a doctor's permission for it or anything like that.

You know, these are just lifestyle changes that all of us can do. That can really make a big impact on, the the headaches that your child is experiencing.

Is there anything else you want to add today, doctor Alfred, for our parents out there who are dealing with this. I don't think so.

Where to find Dr. Alford and her clinic

I just I think a lot of this stuff is really, passionate about and important to me because I don't like putting medicines in kids if I don't have to. Like, I don't think kids should have pill boxes and have to take something every day.

If we can find these other triggers in these other, you know, wellness avenues, it really does go a long way to making their headaches better without having to medicate them all the time.

And so they seem simple, but they make a big difference in the headaches. And I think that's it's sometimes simple is what we need to remember and do.

So I think that's my best piece of advice. Love it. Love it. Yeah, that's a great foundation. And if people want to work with you, come and visit you.

How can they find out about your work? Absolutely. So our website is pediatric Headaches intercom. Our handle on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram is at CR, the number four in the letter U.

And our email us for you@ifl.com if you want to reach out that way. We try following us on Instagram. Facebook is kind of fun. We did. We've done several.

We actually have a YouTube channel as well, which is linked on our website, but we've done some funny T. Rex videos. I've seen those inflatable T-Rex costumes my friend and I have done with migraine tips built in, but it's us in T-Rex suits.

So we try to be entertaining as well as educational. So sometimes just following for the sheer joy of it is not a bad

idea. But, yeah, we do have a full service headache center here in Richmond with an infusion suite and nerve blocks and Botox and everything in one space for you.

So we are always happy to help when we can. I love it. That's great. Yeah. Well, everybody take a look at those social media resources. Or if you happen to be in that area, you should definitely put Doctor Alford's clinic on your radar screen.

And thank you so much for being here today and sharing these nuggets of wisdom with us. I really appreciate it. Thank you so much for having me. It's been a it's been a blast.