



# 2024 INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

**SPEAKER**

**Paul G. Mathew, MD,  
DNBPAS, FAAN, FAHS**

**TITLE & ORGANIZATION**

**Assistant Professor of Neurology  
Harvard Medical School**

**TOPIC**

## How Much Is Too Much Excedrin Migraine?

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Excedrin Migraine is an over-the-counter combination tablet that contains caffeine, acetaminophen (Tylenol), and aspirin.
- The caffeine in Excedrin Migraine can lead to medication overuse headache, as well as sleep dysfunction.
- Due to these and other side effects and the availability of other migraine-specific treatments, Excedrin Migraine is not recommended, but patients can continue consuming caffeine through beverages as tolerated.
- Fioricet and Fiorinal are other combination analgesics that contain caffeine; they also contain butalbital, which can lead to medication overuse headache and rebound headache.
- NSAIDs like aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen can cause stomach irritation, gastritis, and bleeding ulcers if taken frequently or in high doses. They can also cause kidney issues. Acetaminophen can affect liver function over time.
- Excedrin Migraine should be avoided during pregnancy.
- Preventive treatments and migraine-specific acute treatments should be considered as alternatives to Excedrin Migraine.

### TREATMENTS CITED

Acid blockers	Fiorinal (aspirin, butalbital, and caffeine)
Anti-nausea medication	Naproxen
Aspirin	NSAIDs
Barbiturates	Omeprazole
Butalbital	OnabotulinumtoxinA (Botox)
Caffeine	Promethazine
CGRP small-molecule receptor antagonists (gepants)	Proton pump inhibitors
Combination analgesics	Sumatriptan
Excedrin Migraine (acetaminophen, aspirin, and caffeine)	Treximet (naproxen and sumatriptan)
Fioricet (acetaminophen, butalbital, and caffeine)	Triptans
	Tylenol (acetaminophen or paracetamol)

### QUOTES

*"Excedrin Migraine typically does not have a role in my practice, because there are so many other treatments out there that are specific for migraine."*

*"Taking someone's acute treatment away that they've been using for some time and not offering an alternative, I think is very cruel. And so I would certainly recommend some other treatments."*

*"It makes sense to have a couple of different options in your toolbox, and this is a situation where every patient's different and every patient's migraines are different. So in terms of what medications work best, what combinations work best, that's all highly variable for different people."*

*"If you experience any stomach irritation at all when taking NSAIDs, that's your body's way of saying, 'Slow down, you're taking too much.'"*

### PRACTICAL STEPS

- Track your triggers and look at them broadly, since migraine attacks are often the result of a combination of factors and not just one trigger.
- Be cautious about using over-the-counter medications: Overuse of NSAIDs and long-term use of acetaminophen pose potential risks.
- Consider preventive measures instead of relying solely on abortive medications like Excedrin. Preventing attacks from happening in the first place can lead to less reliance on medication and better overall management.
- Explore combination therapies like NSAIDs and triptans or gepants to treat a migraine. Start with an NSAID, and if it doesn't provide relief within 10-15 minutes, consider adding a second-line treatment like a triptan or a gepant.
- Seek out a comprehensive treatment plan that addresses both medicinal and behavioral or lifestyle aspects of migraine management.
- Be alert for potential GI issues arising from NSAID overuse, such as acid reflux and gastritis, and seek medical advice if you're concerned.