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Reduce Migraine and Headache Pain with Acupuncture

More than 45 million Americans (one in six) suffer from chronic headaches, 20 million of whom are women. Scientific research shows that acupuncture can be more effective than medication in reducing the severity and frequency of chronic headaches.

The pain that headache and migraine sufferers endure can impact every aspect of their lives. A widely accepted form of treatment for headaches, acupuncture can offer powerful relief without the side effects that prescription and over-the-counter drugs can cause.



Headaches and migraines, as well as their underlying causes have been treated successfully with acupuncture and Oriental medicine for thousands of years. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can be used alone in the management and treatment of headaches, or as part of a comprehensive treatment program.

Oriental Medicine does not recognize migraines and chronic headaches as one particular syndrome. Instead, it aims to treat the specific symptoms that are unique to each individual using a variety of techniques such as acupuncture, tui-na massage, and energetic exercises to restore imbalances found in the body. Therefore, your diagnosis and treatment will depend a number of questions:

- Is the headache behind your eyes and temples, or is it located more on the top of your head?
- When do your headaches occur? (i.e. night, morning, after eating)
- Do you find that a cold compress or a darkened room can alleviate some of the pain?
- Is the pain dull and throbbing, or sharp and piercing?

Your answers to these questions will help your practitioner create a treatment plan specifically for you. The basic foundation for Oriental medicine is that there is a life energy flowing through the body which is termed Qi. This energy flows through the body on channels known as meridians that connect all of our major organs.

According to Oriental medical theory, illness or pain arises when the cyclical flow of Qi in the meridians becomes unbalanced. Acupuncture stimulates specific points located on or near the surface of the skin to alter various biochemical and physiological conditions that cause aches and pains or illness.

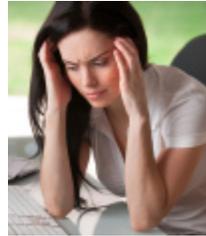
Do you or someone you know suffer from headaches or migraines?

Call today to find out how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help you!



Self Care for Headache Relief

The next time you find yourself with a headache, or feel the tell-tale throbs of one about to come on, try a little self care. By utilizing the heat and energy from your fingertips, combined with the guidance from acupuncture and Oriental medicine, you may be able to ease the pain and suffering from your headache. This is because specific points exist on the body that provide pain relief when activated by simple massaging techniques. When pressed with a moderate amount of pressure, these points can provide relief without any harmful side effects. This technique is known as acupressure.



Headaches present differently for each person, with varying degrees of pain, tension, and/or tenderness. So, a lot will depend on the location of the pain, as far as which points will require massage. However, locating the spots for massage is quite easy, as are the acupressure techniques themselves.

To begin, the first step is to sit comfortably, take a few deep breaths with your eyes closed, and loosen any tension or tight muscles in the body. Performing acupressure while relaxed ensures optimal results.

Alleviate Forehead Headaches

One of the most important points for any kind of headache, but especially in the area of the forehead, is called Large Intestine 4, LI4. To locate it, start by putting your hand palm-side down.

Notice the line between your thumb and first finger. Follow this line to the bottom, by the base of the thumb. You should be able to see, and feel, a 'mound' of soft flesh on the side of the first finger. In the center of this mound is LI4, which comprises an area about the size of a nickel. There are different types of acupressure that may be used at this site. It is important to note that this point is to be avoided by pregnant women.

One technique is to squeeze LI4 between your thumb and your middle finger, applying deep pressure for 5 to 10 seconds, then releasing the pressure for 3 to 5 seconds. This can be done for 2 to 3 minutes. In severe cases, this point may stay pressed with heavy pressure until the pain reduces.

A different approach to stimulating LI4 involves vigorously tapping the right and left side LI4 points together. To do this, place your hands palms-down with your thumbs tucked underneath and out of view. Next, hit your hands together at LI4, up to nine times, and then end by gently shaking your hands.

A variation on this technique involves rubbing the same area together for a few seconds, then stopping. This also can be done up to nine times. In addition to addressing the pain from a headache, performing these exercises at LI4 will also energize your hands and arms.

Relief for Headaches on the Side of Your Head

If your headache is on one or both sides of your head, which can include the temples, then applying pressure at a point called Stomach 8, ST8, may be the best selection. The English name of this point, *Head Corner*, gives us a clue as to where it is located. It is found about a centimeter into the hairline, above the outer corner of the eyebrow.

Using a firm touch from your middle finger, press and hold for 10 seconds. Next, without lifting your fingers, make little clockwise circular motions for 10 seconds. Repeat this procedure in a counter-clockwise motion. This may be repeated for up to 3 minutes.

Relieve Pain and Tension in the Back of Your Head

For relieving pain and tension in the back of the head and neck, the area including and surrounding Gall Bladder 20, GB20, is an excellent choice. To find your right and left GB20, trace your finger up your spine to the base of your skull. You will find your left and right GB20 point about 2 inches outward from your spine, directly below your skull. The medical term for this part of the cranium is the occipital bone.

Cradle the back of your head in both hands and use your thumbs to firmly rub back and forth right below your occipital bones. Create some heat with a vigorous rub, then use your thumb pads to press into the area. This can be done for 2 or 3 minutes.

There's no reason to wait until you actually have a headache to give yourself a healthy dose of self-care though. Practicing these exercises on a daily basis may help prevent headaches, or may lessen the severity of pain if one does occur.

To add a little zing to your massage, charge up your hands by rubbing them together quickly until you generate extra heat and energy to work with.

Acupuncture Reduces Frequency of Migraines

To understand the long term results of acupuncture treatments for migraine headaches, researchers organized a randomized, clinical trial.

The results of this trial appeared in the JAMA Internal Medicine journal in 2017, under the title of "The long term effect of acupuncture for migraine prophylaxis."

The study included 249 patients, aged 18-65 years old, who complained of migraine headaches without aura. Aura is a medical term describing the unpleasant experience which may accompany a migraine or a seizure. It is a disturbing change in vision, smell or thoughts, which precedes the onset of the event. Each participant received 4 weeks of acupuncture treatments coupled with 20 more weeks of follow-up visits. The patients were arbitrarily divided into three groups--the true acupuncture group, the sham acupuncture group and a control group. The control group patients received no treatment. To track the effects of the treatments, patients monitored their symptoms daily and recorded them in a personal diary. Researchers tracked the frequency of headaches, how long they lasted, the severity of, and any additional medications ingested by the patients. At the end of the trial researchers concluded that the acupuncture treatments significantly reduced the frequency of migraines.

Source: Zhao L, Chen J, Li Y, Sun X, Chang X, Zheng H, Gong B, Huang Y, Yang M, Wu X, Li X, Liang F. The Long-term Effect of Acupuncture for Migraine Prophylaxis "A Randomized Clinical Trial". JAMA Intern Med. 2017;177(4):508–515. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.9378.

Studies Show Headaches Reduced

For years, studies around the globe have demonstrated acupuncture is an effective treatment for migraines and headaches.

In a case study, published in the June 2003 Issue of Medical Acupuncture, doctors found that acupuncture resulted in the resolution or reduction in the frequency and severity of cluster headaches, and a decrease or discontinuation of pain medications. It was concluded that acupuncture can be used to provide sustained relief.

According to the July 2005 issue of the British Medical Journal, a randomized controlled trial in Germany found that acupuncture cut tension headache rates almost in half. Those receiving acupuncture reported headache rates of nearly half that of those who received no treatments, suffering 7 fewer days of headaches. The improvements continued for months after the treatments were concluded, rising slightly as time went on.
