

Headache(Migraine) and Acupuncture

The pain that headache and migraine sufferers endure can impact every aspect of their lives. Acupuncture can offer powerful relief without the side effects that prescription and over-the-counter drugs can cause. Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine have been used to relieve Headaches and Migraines, as well as their underlying causes, for thousands of years and is a widely accepted form of treatment for headaches in our society. There are acupuncturists that specialize in the treatment of headaches and migraines and can help you manage your pain with acupuncture and Chinese herbs alone, or as part of a comprehensive treatment program.

Diagnosis with Traditional Chinese Medicine

Traditional Chinese Medicine does not recognize migraines and recurring 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, Chinese herbs, tui-na massage, and energetic exercises to restore imbalances found in the body. Therefore, your diagnosis and treatment will depend on a number of variables: 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 dark room can alleviate some of the pain? Do you describe the pain as dull and throbbing, or sharp and piercing?

Headache and Energy Meridians

These questions will help create a clear picture on which your practitioners can 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 (pronounced chee). This energy flows through the body on channels known as meridians that connect all of our major organs. According to Chinese medical theory, illness arises when the cyclical flow of Qi in the meridians becomes unbalanced. Acupuncture is the stimulation of specific points located near or on the surface of the skin which have the ability to alter various biochemical and physiological conditions in order to achieve the desired effect.

The Acupuncture Treatment

Acupuncture points to treat headaches are located all over the body. During the acupuncture treatment, tiny needles will be placed along your legs, arms, shoulders, and perhaps even your big toe!

There seems to be little sensitivity to the insertion of acupuncture needles. They are so thin that

several acupuncture needles can go into the middle of a hypodermic needle. Occasionally, there is a brief moment of discomfort as the needle penetrates the skin, but once the needles are in place, most people relax and even fall asleep for the duration of the treatment.

The length, number and frequency of treatments will vary. Typical treatments last from five to 30 minutes, with the patient being treated one or two times a week. Some symptoms are relieved after the first treatment, while more severe or chronic ailments often require multiple treatments. The style of acupuncture that your acupuncturist has been trained in will play a roll in length of treatment, number of points used and frequency of visits.

Studies on Acupuncture and Headaches

Since the early seventies, studies around the globe have suggested that acupuncture is an effective treatment for migraines and headaches. Recent studies show extremely positive results:

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 medications. It was concluded that Acupuncture can be used to provide sustained relief from cluster headaches and to stimulate adrenal cortisol to aid in discontinuing corticosteroids.

A clinical observation, published in a 2002 edition of the Journal of Traditional Chinese Medicine, of 50 patients presenting with various types of headaches were treated with scalp acupuncture. The results of this study showed that 98% of patients treated with scalp acupuncture experienced no headaches or only occasional, mild headaches in the six months following care.

In a study published in the November 1999 issue of Cephalalgia, scientists evaluated the effectiveness of acupuncture in the treatment of migraines and recurrent headaches by systematically reviewing 22 randomized controlled trials. A total of 1,042 patients were examined. It was found that headache and migraine sufferers experienced significantly more relief from acupuncture than patients who were administered “sham” acupuncture.

Case One

Ms Wang, 55y, who suffered headaches for 40 years. She complained that she suffered with headaches for 40 years and they gradually got worse in the last 5years. She couldn't have an open window because even a very mild wind would make her head ache. She never left home because of the wind. She tried every medication her family doctor gave and has given up on any medications. Acupuncture was her last resort.

I followed her situation and chose some acupoints to treat her. Two appointments later, she felt her head to be clear and lighter than before. five treatments later, she only felt a little pain and she could go outside with a hat on. ten treatments later she had no more pain. Under my advice, she did 10

more treatments. So far in 3years, her headaches have not recurred .

Case Two

MISS JUDI, 35Y, she had a left side migraine for 7 years after the birth of her son. The pain gradually got worse in the last half year and, she found it was hard to get relief from sleep and rest; it impacted her normal life and made her depressed. Her doctor wanted to give her some pills. She worried that pills would hurt her health. She came to our clinic to ask for acupuncture.

She had 3 visits the first week and felt much better than before. After 6 visits (two times a week) she felt no more pain. She continued treatment for a total of 10 visits. It has now been 2 months since her last visit and still has no pain.

Today, acupuncture is an acknowledged and respected field of medicine which requires formal training and certification in order to practice. In most States, provinces and countries, acupuncture is legislated in order to assure quality of treatment. Acupuncture and Chinese traditional medicine is an art and a science that takes years to master. Look for an acupuncturist with experience.

About the Author

Dr. Vincent Cunhai Yu is a registered acupuncturist who has worked in China and Russia. He is practicing now in VANCOUVER. Dr. Yu is a specialist who has worked in a large hospital for 16 years.

Dr. Yu has done extensive researches on **back pain, digestion related troubles and headaches**. He is also an expert on **arthritis, soft tissue injury, frozen shoulder, tennis elbow, neck pain, insomnia, facial palsy, depression, strokes, quit smoking, and lose weight, hair loss, low immunity, eczema and acne**.

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