



## Acupuncture 4 Headaches & Migraines

*I suffered for 40 years from all kinds of headaches – sinus, tension, caffeine, non-classic migraines. Since treatments, I have had only a couple of momentary flashes. Just enough to remind me of how far I've come, thanks to acupuncture!*

- Ilona Hansen

Acupuncture can offer powerful relief to headache sufferers 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.

Oriental Medicine does not approach migraines and recurring headaches as one particular syndrome. Instead, it aims to treat the specific symptoms that are unique to each individual. Your distinctive symptoms, history, and overall wellbeing provide a clear picture on which your practitioners can create a treatment plan specifically for you.

Acupuncture and herbs work by restoring balance and harmony to the whole system, thus promoting the body's ability to heal itself. Your practitioner will take a two-pronged approach to treatment. First, they will seek to relieve your pain. Then, they will work to reduce the severity and frequency of headaches by developing a preventive course of treatment.

Acupuncture is not only effective for migraine headaches, but also works very well with tension headaches, cluster headaches, post-traumatic headaches, and disease-related headaches that might be due to sinus problems, high blood pressure or sleeping disorders. The greatest advantage of acupuncture over Western medicine is that it does virtually no harm.

## Headache Self Help

### **Tune in to your body.**

Be proactive. Practice good posture. Unclench your jaw. Get up from your desk to stretch now and then.

### **Get adequate sleep**

And don't oversleep on weekends.

### **Be a detective**

Become an expert on your headaches. Keep a diary. Record day, time, food, and other contributing factors, such as stress, hormones, sitting at your desk, interactions with certain people, etc.. Watch for patterns & triggers.

### **Manage stress**

Get outside, meditate, do yoga, or take a deep breath.

### **Balance your blood sugar**

Eat at regular times and don't skip meals. Add in healthy snacks like nuts, veggies, and fruit. Consider eliminating caffeine and refined sugar from your diet.

### **Move**

Studies show that quality of life improves and headaches diminish when you exercise. Even simple neck and upper back stretches throughout the day can help some headaches.

### **Consider bodywork**

Yoga, stretching, craniosacral therapy, and massage all offer benefits of improved circulation and pain relief.

*My migraines were costing me. I had a non-existent personal life, and the financial toll on my law practice was significant. I tried everything - diet changes, physical therapy, chiropractic treatment, a well-known headache clinic, and as a last resort, acupuncture.*

*After about a month of treatments, I started feeling better. I even came during an attack, and got more relief than I'd ever gotten from the shots or drugs - with none of the disturbing side effects.*

*It took several months of treatments, but I haven't had a full-blown migraine for three years. The care, understanding, caring, and concrete suggestions have given me back a quality of life I haven't enjoyed for years.*

- Rebecca Porter

## **It works.**

In a study entitled, *Acupuncture for Chronic Headaches in Primary Care*, the authors concluded that acupuncture leads to persisting, clinically relevant benefits for primary care patients with chronic headaches, particularly migraines, at a small additional cost.

*Vickers, AJ, et al. (2004), 44 (8):846-850*

Two new systematic reviews have found that acupuncture therapy can provide patients who suffer from tension and migraine headache an alternative treatment for their pain.

"There is more evidence coming out showing acupuncture is safe and often effective and should be considered as part of a multidisciplinary approach for chronic pain," said Brian Berman, M.D., director of the University of Maryland Center for Integrative Medicine in Baltimore.

*The Cochrane Library, Issue 1, 2009.*

*A publication of The Cochrane Collaboration, an international organization that evaluates research in all aspects of health care.*

A systematic review of studies concluded that acupuncture was significantly more effective than benzodiazepines for treating insomnia. Acupuncture also appeared to be better at improving sleep than sleep hygiene counseling.

*Traditional needle acupuncture treatment for insomnia: A systematic review of randomized controlled trials. Sleep Med. 2009 Mar 18.*

A pilot study shows that acupuncture can improve the sleep pattern of patients with obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA). Apnoea scores, micro-arousals, and number of nocturnal respiratory events decreased significantly.

*Immediate effect of acupuncture on the sleep pattern of patients with obstructive sleep apnoea. Acupunct Med. 2010 Jun 15.*

In a study of 18 anxious subjects, five weeks of acupuncture treatment was associated with significant improvements in a variety of sleep determinants, reduction in anxiety and nocturnal increase in endogenous melatonin secretion.

*J Neuropsychiatry Clin Neurosci.* 2004 Winter;16(1):19-28.