

NATURAL THERAPY OF MIGRAINE

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ABSTRACT

Management of migraine headaches should begin with identification and removal, if possible, of factors that consistently provoke migraine attacks. Some of these triggers may include environmental factors such as cigarette smoke, loud noise, and bright or flickering lights; psychological factor including stress, anxiety. A number of medications have been associated with drug-intended migraine. Some of these are cimetidine, cocaine, ethnyl estradiol, fluoxetine, histamine, and hormone replacement therapy. Aspirin is considered the drug of choice in these people. In present time treatment involves the natural therapy, which includes feverfew, turmeric, kava, evening primrose and gymnema. Other herbal remedies are shatavari, brahmi, jatamansi, musta. Acupuncture, Homeopathy, Spinal manipulation also include in natural therapy.

KEYWORD: Migraine, Ayurveda, Herbal, Acupuncture, and Aromatherapy

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INTRODUCTION:

Migraine¹ is a chronic disorder affecting approximately 20% people in India. In the past, migraine has been an under diagnosed, misunderstood and mismanaged condition. Fortunately, many advances in migraine management have evolved in recent years.

Definition:

Migraine is a chronic neurological condition. Migraine refers to a recurrent severe headache². These headaches are often accompanied by nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light and/or sensitivity to sound³. Migraines tend to occur at intervals; there may be days, weeks or months between attacks. Attacks can last between 4 and 72 hours. The term migraine comes from the words 'hemicrania', meaning one-sided headache. In most cases the pain occurs only on one side of the head⁴.

Sign and symptoms:

A migraine is characterized⁵ by flashes of light that appear across the field of vision, problems with speech, numbness or dizziness. Migraine pains are typically intense and, at their worst; are debilitating, with weakness, nausea, sweating and vomiting. The senses are heightened and the slightest noise, light or movement unbearable. Usually, the pain is localized or especially intense on one side of the head or over one eye. The person may also suffer from irritability. He or she usually wants to be left alone and out of any direct light⁶. From beginning to end, migraine attacks may last for hours to days.

Causes of Migraine⁷:

Actual cause of migraine is unknown. There are several theories⁸. It appears that, with the modern imaging techniques; we are making headway in understanding the mechanism of formation of migraine.

Instability of the vascular system

One of these theories suggests that certain arteries in our brain contract and cause a reduction blood flow to the visual area of our brain. It is suggested that this reduction of blood flow results in the visual and other symptoms that accompany a migraine.

Magnesium Deficiency

Another theory proposes that nerve cells in the brain begin to lose function which causes a reduction in blood flow, which reduces levels of magnesium, which in turn adds to decreasing nerve cell function and that this dysfunction spreads in a wave like fashion to all effected areas.

Blood platelet disorder

Blood platelet disorder has also been implicated, with the platelets of migraine sufferers aggregating more readily than normal platelets in response to neurotransmitters such as serotonin and adrenaline, the "stress" hormone¹.

Serotonin

Many researchers feel that serotonin; an important brain chemical may fuel migraines. Platelets (components of our blood) contain all of the serotonin normally present in blood and after they aggregate, (clump together) serotonin is released, resulting in a potent constricting effect on the



arteries. Eating certain foods, drinking certain beverages, stressing out or sometimes just oversleeping can trigger release of serotonin. Due to this, the blood vessels in head narrowed. As kidney process the serotonin, its blood levels drops; the blood vessels dilate rapidly, pressing on surrounding nerves and causing pain and inflammation. The ache can last for hours or days because the swelling lingers after the blood vessels return to normal.

The nervous system Disorders

The nervous system itself may also be implicated, as it releases specific neurotransmitters⁹, possibly in response to chronic stress.

Food

Certain foods contain chemicals-amines-that dilate the blood vessels, causing a rebound vasodilatation and may thus precipitate an attack.

Low Blood Sugar or Hypoglycemia

For most people, low blood sugar caused by fasting or irregular meals often brings on a headache¹⁰; but it quickly disappears following a meal. But for people prone to migraines, the low blood sugar may start off a chain reaction that a belated meal will not stop.

Estrogen Level Fluctuation in Women

Women suffer from migraine much more frequently than men. Recent research has pointed to fluctuating levels of estrogen as a factor in their development.

Stress, Anxiety and Excitement

Stress, anxiety¹², and excitement promote the release of hormones and neurotransmitters, which can provoke a migraine attack. While it may be difficult to avoid stress, it can be alleviated through exercise. One researcher reported that several of his patients became migraine-free after jogging 7 to 9 miles a day, at a speed of seven to nine minutes per mile. Of course jogging is not suitable for everyone, but even moderate exercise can relieve tension and stress.

Other Factors

Other factors that have been known to precipitate migraines are:

- Changes in routine, such as late rising on a holiday or change of working hours;
- Changes in climate, high winds, loud or high-pitched sounds;
- Bright sunlight and bright artificial light, such as fluorescent; and
- Prolonged staring at television, movie, or computer screens.

Complementary Therapies:

Acupuncture:

Acupuncturists suggest that migraine headaches are caused by an imbalance in the body's flow of energy. They use acupuncture¹³⁻¹⁴ to reestablish this equilibrium, thereby treating the cause and the pain of migraine. Although acupuncture can ease the pain of an attack, this therapy is best used as a preventive treatment for migraine. Before treating with acupuncture, you need to ascertain



the location of the headache. Because the head is traversed by many meridians, the location of the headache determines which meridians are involved. For example:

- Pain in the occipit and nape of the neck indicates blockage in the bladder meridian.
- Pain at the forehead and above the eyes indicates the stomach meridian.
- Pain by the temples and side of the head is related to the gallbladder meridian.
- Pain at the top of the head indicates an imbalance in the liver meridian.

Physiotherapy:

Treatment included relaxation, stretching, ice therapy and teaching control of muscle tension.¹⁹

Spinal manipulation Aromatherapy:

Aromatherapy, (inhalations, baths, or massages using these essential oils) has been proved to be effective in controlling migraine. It has calming and relaxing effect. Following Oils have been recommended in aromatherapy.

- Anger, worry, hyperactivity: Chamomile
- Sharp, piercing pain, lethargy and despondency: Rosemary, Peppermint
- Mild pain, lethargy: Lemon
- Colds, sinusitis: Eucalyptus
- Hyperactivity, overwork: Sweet marjoram

Deep Breathing:

Rhythmic breathing may reduce pain or accentuate pain. Deep breathing exercises can

help to normalize breathing, which will reduce the intensity of pain.

Herbal Medicine:¹⁶

1. *Feverfew*: Extract of feverfew leaf has been shown to be effective in migraine¹⁷. A recommended daily dosage of 125 mg of a dried feverfew leaf preparation containing a minimum of 0.2% parthenolide is often prescribed for migraine prevention.

2. *Ginkgo biloba*: Ginkgo biloba increases blood circulation. It has been shown to offer some promise for the management of migraine. The daily dose ranged from 120 to 240 mg may be beneficial in preventing migraine due to its ability to inhibit platelet-activating factor. It can cause minor headaches when initially taken. This effect subsides usually within the first week of use.

3. *Ginger*: Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) inhibits platelet aggregation. Ginger tea is also effective for a migraine headache in the front of the head. The recommended dose is 500-600 mg every 4 hours for 4 days decreased frequency and intensity of migraines.

4. *Kava*: Kava has a mellowing effect that may be helpful for the treatment of stress-related migraines^{18, 19}. The recommended dose is equal to 140- 210 mg of kava lactone.

5. *Valerian*: Valerian has traditionally been used for relaxation at bedtime, but may be helpful in reducing the incidence of recurring headaches due to stress. The recommended dose is 300 to 500 mg.



7. Jamaican dogwood (*Piscidia erythrina*): It is used in the form of decoction for migraine accompanied by insomnia or dysmenorrhea.

8. Black horehound (*Ballota nigra*): It is used to relieve symptoms of nausea and vomiting also combined well with meadowsweet and chamomile in infusion.

9. Damiana, kola, sarsaparilla, and ginseng: These are recommended when migraine is due to fatigue, lassitude, and general debility.

10. Fenugreek: It is used in the form of infusion, steeped 5-15 minutes; recommended dose is 1 cup during the day, hot or cold.

11. Peppermint: It is used in the form of oil, 5-10 drops, 3 times daily; fluid extraction, 1-2 tsp., 3 times daily; infusion, (steeped 5-15 minutes), dose 6 oz., 3 times daily

12. Rosemary: It is used in the form of infusion, (steeped 5-15 minutes), dose 2 oz., 3 times daily; oil, 1-3 drops, 3 times daily; external: Rub diluted oil (1 part rosemary with 10 parts vegetable oil) on forehead and temples. Also used as a nasal vapor bath.

13. Chamomile: Chamomile tea helps prevent migraines.

14. Lavender: Lavender has antispasmodic and cooling properties. It is used for rubbing on the temples and fore head.

15. Turmeric: Turmeric rhizome has been used for centuries internally as a tonic for the stomach and liver and as a blood purifier, and externally in the treatment and prevention of skin disease and in arthritis complements.²⁰ the anti-inflammatory strength of turmeric is comparable to steroidal

drugs such as indomethacin²¹. Turmeric has been reported to be anti-rheumatic, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant²². Many of these pharmacological factors contribute to the supportive use of turmeric in migraine headaches²³.

16. Evening primrose: Evening primrose oil (EPO) is rich in gamma-linoleic acid, which is an omega-6 fatty acid^{24, 25}. Omega-6 fatty acids reportedly reduce the arachidonic acid cascade and decrease inflammation through inhibiting the formation of inflammatory mediators in this process.

Herbal Teas:^{26, 27}

Following Herbal Teas are shown to be effective in controlling migraine.

- Marjoram, St. John's wort, fennel or caraway seed tea with 1 tsp. of honey is helpful for relieving symptoms.
- Agrimony, wormwood and centaury are mixed well and Poured boiling water over 1 tsp. of this mix, steeped five minutes and strained.

Bach Flower Remedy/Essence Therapy:

People prone to migraines often have a hard time dealing with anger. Such people may benefit from the Bach remedy Gentian²⁹, which helps balance out the hopelessness and frustration that can cause migraine.

Nutritional supplementation:

Following nutritional supplements have been proved effective in management of migraine.

1. Magnesium³⁰⁻³²



2. Vitamin B²³³
3. Vitamin D and calcium^{34, 35}
4. Omega-3 fatty acids and omega-6 fatty acids³⁶

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