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# Acupuncture for Migraine

If you suffer from migraine headaches, you know how debilitating the pain and discomfort can be. According to Statistics Canada, one in every 12 Canadians more than two million people regularly get migraines. These throbbing headaches, which can affect every aspect of life, may be prevented and treated with acupuncture.

Acupuncture for migraine is the most common reason that physicians refer their patients to doctors of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). In 1979 in Beijing, the World Health Organization recognized acupuncture as an effective migraine treatment.

### Getting to the Root

The purpose of using TCM is to treat the root cause of the migraine attacks, rather than provide a temporary solution. Acupuncture in combination with traditional Chinese herbal medicine aims to treat the migraine headache (the branch) as well as the underlying imbalance (the root).

Sometimes the flow of the body's vital energy (chi) and blood from the liver is blocked, and whenever blockage occurs, pain happens. The liver is easily affected by stress and anxiety. Hence the pain of migraine headaches whenever emotions such as anger, worry, fear, shock, frustration, and resentment overwhelm or when we work excessively, both physically and mentally. Energy can also be blocked and lead to migraine headaches because of traumatic injury; external pathogenic factors, such as wind and dampness; and hormone fluctuations (the menstrual cycle).

### Pins and Needles

In the treatment of migraines, fine stainless steel acupuncture needles stimulate specific points that help your body regulate blood flow in the small vessels that typically become constricted in a migraine attack. Acupuncture treatment also helps the body balance levels of serotonin, a blood compound that constricts blood vessels and acts as a

neurotransmitter. Numerous studies, including a Thai study published in the January 2006 issue of *Headache*, have found that low serotonin levels make people more vulnerable to migraine headaches.

In addition, acupuncture releases endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. Most important, acupuncture relaxes tense muscles, which can also help to relieve migraines. A typical acupuncture treatment lasts from 30 minutes to an hour and is a comfortable and relaxing experience.

A study led by Dr. Baischer of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Vienna showed that the improvements achieved by acupuncture therapy are stable over a long period of time. During a five-week observation period, the frequency of migraine attacks immediately after treatment was significantly reduced and remained low in a three-year follow-up period. Use of pain medications was reduced by half.

Acupuncture can help migraine sufferers take charge of their health. You shouldn't have to suffer with migraines anymore.

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