



Japanese Acupuncture for Migraine Headaches

A migraine headache is defined as a severe, pulsating, one-sided headache, lasting from 4 to 72 hours and is aggravated by routine physical activity. Nausea, vomiting and/or sensitivity often accompany migraines to light and sound. In addition, visual disturbances (auras) lasting from 4 to 60 minutes may occur either before or during a migraine headache.

Migraines are sometimes called vascular headaches because they involve a restriction in blood flow to the brain. Stress or some other trigger, causes muscle tension and spasm at the base of the skull, restricting the blood supply to the brain. In response, blood vessels in and around the brain dilate in order to compensate for the reduced oxygen. The pressure of these dilating arteries on cranial nerves causes the severe throbbing pain associated with migraine headaches.

One of the best alternative therapies for a migraine headache is Japanese Acupuncture combined with the ancient practice or “cupping”. Cups are round vessels, 1” to 3” in diameter, which are applied to the body with vacuum suction. The vacuum is created either by means of heating the air inside the cup near the surface of the body, creating an immediate improvement in circulation. In particular, cupping helps to reset or regulate the tension in the arteries, helping to relax overly tense arteries and tighten those that are too loose. Cupping certain areas on the back can produce this regulating effect throughout the entire body.

In addition to Acupuncture and cupping, dietary and lifestyle changes can often help to reduce the frequency and severity of headaches. In this regard, the following suggestions may be helpful.

Experiment avoiding foods that are known to trigger migraines for some people. The most common problem foods, in order of importance are:

- Tannins in tea, red wine and apple cider
- Chocolate
- Aged cheese
- Other dairy products
- Peanuts
- Poultry, including eggs
- Caffeine in coffee, tea and cola drinks
- Sulfites in processed meats and seafood
- Beef
- Wheat
- Food additives such as MSG, artificial sweeteners (especially those containing Aspartame) and food colorings
- Heavily processed or packaged foods

To find out if any of these foods are a trigger for you, experiment by eliminating one at a time for a couple of weeks and observe any change in the frequency or severity of your headaches. In addition, a number of prescription medications can cause migraine headaches in some people. Read the information sheet that comes with your prescription medication and if headaches are a possible side effect, consult with your doctor to see if an alternative medication can be prescribed.