

Ayurvedic and Allopathic Approaches to Migraine Headaches

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Table of Contents

CONTENTS	Page Number
Abstract	3
Western Interpretation of Migraine Headache	3
Classic Migraine	3
Common Migraine	3
Cluster Migraine	4
Complicated Migraine	4
Abdominal Migraine	4
Basilar Migraine	4
Benign Exertional Migraine	4
Headache Free Migraine	4
Hemiplegic Migraine	4
Menstrual Migraine	5
Ocular Migraine	5
Ophthalmoplegic Migraine	5
Status Migrainosus	5
Non-Food Related Triggers	6
Food Related Triggers	7
Allopathic / Pharmaceutical Treatment Options	8
Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs	8
Triptans	9
Ergotamine Tartrate	9
Midrin	9
<i>Ayurvedic</i> Interpretation of Migraine Headache	9
Diseases of the head	10
<i>Vata</i> Type Headache	10
<i>Pitta</i> Type Headache	12
<i>Kapha</i> Type Headache	15
<i>Suryavarta</i> Headache	16
Treatments	16
Herbs for Headaches	16
Biofeedback	17
Visualization	17
Meditation / Deep Breathing / Progressive Muscle Relaxation	18
Cervical Correction Device	18
Reflexology	18
Cervical Manipulation and Massage	18
Conclusion	18
References	19

ABSTRACT:

Migraine headaches, or migraines, are fast becoming one of the more common diseases afflicting people today. Migraine headaches affect all members of the household, including children, with about “30 million Americans) or 1 in 4 US households)” (29) suffering from this disease today. In fact, during the ten-year span of 1989 – 1999 alone, the number of migraineurs (or migraine sufferers) increased by 4.3 million people. (21). It is estimated that in the US migraines cost employers over \$24 billion dollars every year due to time lost. The exact causes of migraine seem to be under debate, though many factors known as “triggers” have been identified that bring on migraines in many people. There are currently no known cures for migraine headaches, however preventative measures have been identified.

Western Interpretation of Migraine Headache

Migraine headaches are defined as pain occurring on either one or both sides of the head that is throbbing or pulsating in nature. The pain can be combined with nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light and sound and distorted vision. The pain may last from several hours to several days. Migraine headaches may occur as often as several times per week, to as few as one per year. Migraine headaches may begin as early as childhood, and may become less frequent or less intense with age.

There are at least thirteen types of migraine headaches:

Classic Migraine – a type of migraine involving the presence of an aura 10-30 minutes prior to the actual appearance of a headache. The aura may be preceded by irritability, and can present with transient visual field loss, nausea, vomiting, throbbing or pounding pain in the forehead, temple and jaw. There can be difficulty with speech, limb weakness and confusion. This type of migraine may persist for several days and tends to decrease gradually with age.

Common Migraine – a type of migraine that is clinically the same as Classic Migraine, however, no aura precedes the attack. Some symptoms may occur prior to the migraine that include mood changes, fatigue, retention of fluids, diarrhea, increased urination, mental vagueness and nausea and vomiting. This type of migraine may last up to four days.

Cluster Migraine - a type of migraine wherein there is severe unilateral periodic pain in the ocular orbit and around the ear. This may present with nasal congestion, tearing of the eyes, and redness over the face and neck. The pain usually begins in the early part of the day and lasts for about 30-90 minutes. This may occur for several weeks with a several week break before the next round begins. This type of headache is more prominent in men and tends to onset in the third decade.

Complicated Migraine – a neurological headache that occurs with a prickling sensation over the face, palms, feet, etc., along with speech difficulty and fatigue.

Abdominal Migraine – a type of migraine often occurring in children that presents with pain in the stomach that leads to nausea and vomiting often without a headache.

Basilar Migraine – a type of migraine that typically occurs in adolescent and young women and is associated with the menstrual cycle. It is characterized by a disturbance in the basilar artery, which is a major artery in the brain. This type of migraine is rare, however it can have a potential health risk and can lead to a transient ischemic attack (TIA) or stroke. Symptoms of this type of migraine include; double vision, partial vision loss, vomiting, dizziness, loss of balance and coordination, numbness, weakness or confusion. These symptoms may appear once the headache begins, or they may last as long as several days after the pain subsides. (46)

Benign Exertional Headache – a type of migraine that usually subsides after a few minutes and is brought on by physical exertion such as running, lifting, sneezing or bending.

Headache Free Migraine – a type of migraine characterized by symptoms such as visual disturbances, nausea, vomiting, constipation or diarrhea with no head pain.

Hemiplegic Migraine – a type of migraine involving such symptoms as temporary paralysis on one side of the body, vertigo and vision deficits occurring approximately 10 – 90 minutes prior to head pain. The symptoms do not always recede once the pain begins. This type of migraine is often genetic, but can occur in those with no genetic history, and often is childhood onset.

Menstrual Migraine – a type of migraine with an association to the menstrual and hormonal cycle of women. This type of migraine may be more prevalent in women using hormonal birth control or estrogen replacement therapies. This type of migraine is often more resistant to treatment. It is not associated with an aura, often lasts longer than other migraines, and is “associated with more functional disability compared with attacks at other times of the month.” (32)

Ocular Migraine - a rare type of migraine expressing with visual disturbances and lasting less than one hour. There may be temporary, partial or total vision loss in one eye during this type of attack. Once the visual disturbance has subsided, a dull ache may remain behind the affected eye or in the head.

Ophthalmoplegic Migraine – once thought to be a form of migraine, these are now thought to be a form of neuritis. This condition is often diagnosed in children and is characterized by pain around the eyeball and temporary weakness or paralysis of the eye. There may be double-vision, a presence of a droopy eyelid, dilated pupil or other vision problems. This can last for several days or months.

Status Migrainosus - a severe migraine lasting 72 hours or more, which may result in hospitalization. This type of attack may lead to such problems as dehydration.

Migraine headaches do not discriminate by either ethnicity, age or gender. There are genetic predispositions identified in migraine sufferers, however one need not have a genetic history of migraine to suffer from them. Of all sufferers, the female population is three times more likely to suffer from migraine headaches, most usually those associated with the hormonal cycles. The prevalence of migraine in the general population is approximately 6% in men, and 15% in women, with migraines peaking at about the age of 40 and then declining. (31) Children may suffer from migraines, with boys and girls suffering at the same degree until puberty. Once in puberty, girls are three times more likely to suffer from migraines than boys. The American Academy of Neurology estimates that migraine occur in 3% of preschool children, 4% to 11% of elementary school children, and up to 23% of teenagers.

The direct causes of migraines are unknown. There seems to be a key element involving blood flow to the brain. Some believe that migraines are a neurovascular disorder caused by the brain. Other theories include the idea that there are metabolic disturbances or an abnormal release of neuro-chemicals in the brain, like serotonin and noradrenalin or high levels of such substances as ammonia, histamine, etc being released into the blood. (15)

Some say that migraines are a result of a temporary narrowing of the vessels in the brain, which cause a decrease of availability of blood and oxygen to the brain. Due to this decrease, the brain signals for more oxygen, and blood vessels dilate to allow for greater blood flow. The vessels then become inflamed and throb causing a pounding pain. (22)

Another theory supposes that migraineurs have blood vessels that are more sensitive to external triggers. Scientists theorize that the migraineur's nervous system responds to a trigger, which causes a spasm of the nerve rich arteries at the base of the brain. These spasms constrict the arteries and affect the amount of blood being delivered to the brain. Because of this constriction there is a decrease in platelets in the brain. This triggers the release of serotonin, further reducing blood flow to the brain. Other arteries in the brain dilate in response to this decreased flow, then there is a release of other chemicals that produce pain and increased sensitivity to pain, resulting in migraine. (4)

The most prevalent idea is that there are triggers that affect migraineurs adversely, and the response to the triggers is migraine. While each individual will have their specific triggers, a list of common triggers would include:

NON-FOOD RELATED TRIGGERS

- Strong odors, bright lights or loud noises
- Changes in weather or altitude
- Being stressed, depressed or tired
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Changes in meal schedules or fasting
- Hormonal changes or menstruation
- Physical exertion

FOOD RELATED TRIGGERS

- Alcohol, especially red wine
- Aspartame
- Tyramine containing foods, such as beans
- Caffeine
- Aged Cheeses
- Cultured Dairy Products such as yogurt, sour cream and buttermilk
- Foods containing MSG
- Chocolate
- Aged, Cured or Processed Meats
- Avocados
- Brewer's Yeast
- Canned Soup or Bouillon cubes
- Figs
- Nuts and Peanut Butter
- Onions
- Papaya
- Passion Fruit
- Pickled, Prepared or Marinated foods – ie., olives, pickles
- Raisins
- Red Plums
- Sauerkraut
- Seasoned Salt
- Snow peas
- Soy Sauce

As the best course of treatment of migraine is prevention, it is important for a migraineur to keep a journal of the habits, environment and foods they were surrounded by before the onset of the migraine.

Determination of an individual's triggers and then avoiding them can potentially greatly reduce the incidence of migraines.

Other habits shown to be of great benefit in the prevention of migraine are:

- Having a consistent sleep schedule and getting enough sleep. 7-8 hours of sleep per night are recommended.
- Having a consistent eating schedule. Skipping meals or fasting can cause a drop in blood sugar and bring on a migraine.
- Regular exercise is important in reducing stress, and improving blood flow. Aerobic activity of at least 30 minutes three times per week is recommended.

ALLOPATHIC / PHARMACEUTICAL TREATMENT OPTIONS

There are no known cures for migraine headaches. There are two forms of pharmaceutical approaches that are either preventive or abortive.

Preventive drugs are taken on a regular basis and aim at reducing the severity or frequency of the attacks.

Abortive, or pain-relieving drugs are used for individual migraines to help combat the pain once it has begun. There are several different classes of pain relieving drugs:

- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). These drugs may be available over the counter, or as prescription, and are commonly known as ibuprofen or aspirin. These drugs may help relieve mild migraines, but may have little effect on a migraine that is more severe. Some NSAID's are marketed specifically for use with migraine and may contain some additional ingredients to increase potency. Such an example would be Excedrin Migraine, which contains a combination of aspirin, acetaminophen and caffeine. Taken over long periods of time NSAID's may cause harm to the body by leading to ulcers, gastrointestinal bleeding and rebound headaches.
- Triptans. Triptans are often a doctor's first choice of pharmaceutical treatment of migraine. Triptans work by balancing chemicals in the brain.

- Ergotamine tartrate. – one of the most commonly used drugs to treat migraines that works by constricting the vessels that are dilating and causing the headache pain. Ergotamine is generally only effective in the early stages of the headache and will not be of much help once the migraine is in full swing. (4)
- Midrin – this is an abortive that contains a pain reliever and a mild sedative

Preventive drugs. There are several types of drugs that are used to prevent migraine

- Antidepressants
- Anticonvulsants
- Beta-blockers
- Calcium channel blockers

Ayurvedic Interpretation of Migraine Headache

In *Ayurveda*, headaches are known by any of the following names: *shiro roga*, *shiro tapa* and *shirah shula*. (47). According to Sushrutucharya and Bhavaprakashkar, there are eleven types of *shiro roga*: *Vataja*, *Pittaja*, *Kaphaja*, *Sannipataj*, *Raktaja*, *Krimija*, *Kshyaja*, *Shankhaka*, *Suryavarta*, *Anantvata* and *Ardhavabhedaka*. (15) (47)

Of each of these types, the translation of *Ardhavabhedaka* seems to be most fitting for migraine headaches, as *Ardha* refers to something affecting only one side of the head, and *Bhedanavat* indicates that is splitting in nature. (17)

The Charaka Samhita lists only five diseases of the head, or *shiro roga*.

Diagnosis of Siro-Roga (Diseases of the Head)

In the vatika type of siro-roga (head-diseases), there is excruciating pain, ache and throbbing sensation.

Pattika type of siro-roga (headache) is associated with burning sensation and pain.

Kaphaja type of headache is associated with heaviness.

In sannipatika type of shiro-roga (headache), which is caused by the simultaneous aggravation of all the three dosas, all the above mentioned signs and symptoms are manifested.

Krimija siro-roga (headache caused by parasitic infestation) gives rise to itching, foul smell, pricking sensation and pain in the head.

[Charaka Samhita – Vol IV, pg 504]

The *Astanga Hridayam* lists ten types of diseases of the head: *shiro roga*, *sirastapa* (of *vata*, *pitta*, *kapha* and *rakta* origin), *ardhavabheda*, *sirakampa*, *sankhaka*, and *suryavarta*.

Migraine headaches most often appear to be *tridoshic* in nature, though migraines can be caused by vitiation of either *dosha*.

Vata's influence is the involvement of the nervous system and of pain.

Pitta's influence is the involvement of the circulatory system

Kapha's influence is the presence of inflammation of tissue in the brain (17)

Following is a discussion of some of the more common conditions of headache:

DISEASES OF THE HEAD

There might be pain only in half of the head or all over the head, or there might be coryza (pratisyaya), diseases of the mouth, nose, eyes and ears or there might be a feeling of giddiness. There might as well be paralysis, trembling of the head; stiffness of the throat, sternomastoid muscle and jaw, and similar other diseases arising out of krmī (germ) and vata etc.

[Charaka Samhita Vol 1, Sutras 13– 14].

VATA-TYPE HEADACHE

According to Dr. Marc Halpern, Clinical Director of the California College of Ayurveda, *vata* plays a significant role in all headaches, as “all headaches are conditions of pain” and “pain in the head may be simply understood as excessive upward movement of *vata*.” (47)

Nidana (Cause)

Vata type migraines are brought on by habits that vitiate *vata* – (such as exposure to heavy breeze; increase in cold, dry and rainy season; stress; over-fasting; insufficient sleep; excessive talking; excess sexual activity; travel; loud noises or loud music; and such emotions as worry, sadness or fear). The patient finds relief from oily, warm and moist treatments.

Rupa (Symptoms)

Vata type migraines may present with: throbbing pain, inability to move the head without worsening the pain, a tingling sensation in some parts of the body, sensitivity to sound, hemiparalysis, anxiety, depression, dry skin, constipation.

The *Astanga Hridayam* cites such symptoms as:

“severe pricking pain in the two temples, . . . ears are painful and have noise in them; eyes feel as though being plucked out, and heads reels and feels loose in all its joints, there is severe pulsations in the network of veins, . . . rigidity of the lower jaw and shoulders, intolerance to light,” and “running in the nose.”

[Vol III. Sutras 4-7].

The *Caraka Samhita* describes *vata* type headache as:

There is pain in the temporal region and cracking sensation in the nape. The head and central part of the eye brows have also excessive pain and burning sensation. There is pain and noise in the ears, there is a feeling as if the eyes are coming out. There is giddiness, the joints are severed as it were, and there is excessive throbbing of the vein; the neck is stiffened. The patient gets relief by unctuous and warm regimen. This is *vatika* type of head disease.

[Volume 1, Sutras 15-21] p 40

Samprapti (Pathology)

Vata accumulates and aggravates in the *purishavaha srota*, then overflows into the *rasa* and *rakta dhatus*, relocating more deeply into the *raktavaha srota* causing throbbing, pounding pain, and the *majja dhatu* creating phono and photo phobia. Final relocation to the *manovaha srota* creates stress, worry, overwhelm, and insomnia. (47)

Chikitsa (Treatment)

For *vatika* type of headache, oleation, fomentation and inhalation therapies, and *vayu*-alleviating drinks, food and hot poultices should be administered.

[*Caraka Samhita*, Vol 1, Sutra 158]

With *vata* type of headache, the normal downward flow of *apana vayu* has been disturbed and needs to

be restored (47). This restoration may be accomplished by the administration of laxatives, purgatives and enema (*Niruha basti*). Normal Ayurvedic protocol follows a cleansing enema with a tonifying oil (*Anuvasana basti*) enema. This will nourish the patient and restore healthful moisture in the colon. Dr. Vasant Lad additionally recommends taking _ tsp of *triphala* per night over several weeks to assist in the detoxification of the colon. (42)

Other recommendations for the treatment of *vata* type headaches are:

Oil Massage – use warm sesame oil to massage out tension from the neck and shoulders. A warm shower or bath should follow this. One may also apply warm sesame oil to the scalp and soles of the feet before retiring. (42)

Nasya – *nasya* treatment is especially valuable for disorders that affect organs above the shoulders. An application of 3-5 drops of warm *ghee* per nostril can be effective for a headache (42). *Shadabindu Tailam Nasya* is said to be particularly helpful for migraine. Application of this *nasya* should be preceded by a warm oil massage and fomentation of the forehead, sinus and nose. (15)

Herbal Paste – application of an herbal paste made from nutmeg, ginger, garlic, cinnamon, or combinations thereof to the forehead and temples can help ease the discomfort of *vata* type headache. (42) (47)

Following a general *vata* pacifying lifestyle such as having a regular sleep and eating schedules, eating a *vata* pacifying diet, maintaining proper hydration, oleation, avoidance of cool, dry weather, and emotions that increase *vata*, will help with this condition.

PITTA-TYPE HEADACHE

Dr. Vasant Lad states “in every migraine headache, *pitta dosha* is the cause, while *vata* or *kapha* may be involved as the secondary *dosha*.” (43) Migraines “most frequently occur when systemic *pitta* moves into the cardiovascular system, circulates, and affects the blood vessels around the brain.” (42).

Pitta-type headaches are related to the stomach and intestines per Dr. Vasant Lad (42), and Vaidya Balendu Prakash states “after a close analysis of the disease, I found that it was more of a gastroenterological disorder rather than a neurological one. Most of those suffering from migraine had issues like acidity and stomach problems.” (8)

Nidana (Cause)

By intake of substances having acrid, sour and saline tastes, alkalies and alcohols, by anger, by exposure to sun and fire, the pitta dosa in the head gets vitiated and thereby produces head diseases resulting in burning and aching sensation in the head. The patient develops a liking for cold substance. There is burning sensation in the eyes and the patient is subjected to thirst, giddiness and perspiration in excess.

[Charaka Samhita, Vol 1, Sutras 22-23]

Pitta type headaches are brought on by habits that vitiate *pitta dosha* – including excess emotion of intensity or anger. *Pitta* type migraine may be brought on, or exacerbated, by exposure to excess heat and sunlight.

Rupa (Symptoms)

Pitta type headaches may present with the following: pain that is burning, piercing, shooting, or penetrating. There may be redness or burning of the eyes, nausea and possible dizziness. These symptoms may be worse with exposure to bright lights, hot sun, high temperatures and the consumption of spicy and sour foods.

In Sirastapa of *pitta* origin there is a feeling of hot fumes coming out from the head, fever, profuse sweating, burning sensation in the eyes, fainting, pain becomes less at night and by cold things.

[Astanga Hridayam pg 219, Sutra 9]

Pachaka pitta accumulates and aggravates in the *annavaha srota*. From there, it overflows to the *rasavaha* and *raktavaha srotas*, relocating to the *rasa* and *rakta dhatus* of the *pranavaha srota*, there causing possible nosebleeds and or infection of the sinus cavity. Relocation into the *manovaha srota* can result in anger and intensity, while relocation to the *majja dhatu* will express as “burning nerve” pain in the head. (47)

Chikitsa (Treatment)

In *pattika* type of headache, *ghee*, milk, affusion, cold poultice, inhalation therapy prepared of cooling drugs, medicated *ghees* prepared with drugs belonging to *Jivaniya* group (vide *Sutra* 4:9), and *pitta*-alleviating food and drinks are useful.

Candana, *usira*, *yasti-madhu*, *bala*, *vyaghra-nahka* and *utpala* should be made to a paste by triturating with milk which should be applied over the head. The decoction of the above mentioned drugs may also be used for affusion in *pattika* type of headache.

Tvak, *patra* and sugar should be made to a paste by adding *tandulambu* (rice wash). This paste should be kept inside a cloth, and the liquid should be squeezed into the nostrils (*avapida*). Thereafter, *ghee* should be given for inhalation to alleviate *pattika* type of headache.

Medicated *ghee* prepared by boiling with *yasti-madhu*, *candana*, *ananta* and milk is useful in inhalation. Similarly, inhalation of the medicated *ghee* prepared by boiling with sugar, *draksa*, and *madhuka* is useful in *pattika* type of headache.

[Caraka Samhita Vol IV, Sutras 176-179]

As *pitta* type headache may be combined with *vata*, administration of purgatives will be valuable for constipation. Purgatives for such use may include: fennel, rhubarb, aloe vera, *cascara sagrada* and *avipattikar churna*. (47) & (19)

Other recommendations for the treatment of *pitta* type headaches are:

Nasya – as for *vata* type headaches, *nasya* application is also soothing for *pitta* type headaches. Warm *ghee* or *brahmi ghee*, or *nasya* oil made with cooling nervine sedatives are beneficial.

Cooling pranayama – the practices of *shitali* and *kapalabhati* are used for *pitta*. These *pranayama* exercises will “lower the body temperature, make the saliva cool, help quench thirst, improve digestion, absorption and assimilation.” (13)

Mini-Massage – application of *bhringaraj* or *brahmi* oil on the soles of the feet and scalp each evening. (42)

Herbal Paste - Application of sandalwood paste to the forehead and temples for one half hour may have a soothing effect on the headache. (42)

Herbal Remedies – blends of such herbs as: *shatavari*, *brahmi*, *jatamamsi* and *musta* will help pacify aggravated *pitta* and bring headache relief.

Yoga Asana – Helpful Yoga postures are the Moon Salutation, Hidden Lotus, Boat Pose, Spinal Twist, Palm Tree Pose. (42)

Avoidance – as direct sun exposure can elevate a *pitta* headache, wearing a hat will help to block some

of the aggravating *pitta* rays. (42)

Following a general *pitta*-pacifying routine will be helpful for this condition.

KAPHA-TYPE HEADACHE

Kapha-type headaches are often as a result of congestion of the nose and sinus due to a cough, cold, or allergies. This type of headache is more prevalent in the winter or spring, is worse when you bend down.

(42)

***Nidana* (Cause)**

Kapha type headaches are brought on by habits that vitiate *kapha dosha*, such as a cold, moist diet; exposure to a cold, moist climate, lethargy and sluggishness. (47)

***Rupa* (Symptoms)**

In that born from *kapha* there is a loss of taste, feeling of heaviness in the head, rigidity and cold, veins not pulsating, lassitude, pain is mild during day and severe at nights, stupor, swelling of the eye, itching inside the ears and vomiting are present.

[*Astanga Hridayam* Vol 3, pg 220, sutras 10-11a].

Kapha type headaches present with heaviness, congestion, low appetite, vomiting, and nausea.

***Samprapti* (Pathology)**

Kapha accumulates and aggravates in the *annavaha srota*, overflowing to the *rasa* and *rakta dhatus* and relocating to the *pranavaha srota* causing congestion.

Kledhaka kapha accumulates and aggravates in the stomach causing slow digestion and a feeling of heaviness. This overflows into the *rasa dhatu*, overflowing to the *pranavaha srota* causing congestion and a possible runny nose. (47).

***Chikitsa* (Treatment)**

In *kaphaja* type of headache, fomentation therapy, smoking therapy, inhalation therapy, *pradhamana* (insufflation of powders into the nostrils), etc., should be administered for cleansing the morbid matter of the head. Thereafter, *kapha*-alleviating *pralepa* (application of drugs in a paste form), drinks and food should be given to the patient. He should be given old *ghee* to drink. To such patients, medicated enema prepared of drugs having *tiksna* (sharp) attributes should be administered.

[*Caraka Samhita*, Vol IV, Sutra 180]

Since *kapha* type headaches are often the result of congestion, clearing the sinuses / body of congestion will bring relief.

Nasya – rather than *nasya* with oils or *ghee*, *kapha* type headache responds better to a *nasya* made of warm saltwater, applied to each nostril. This will help drain and clear the sinuses. (42)

Herbal Paste – a paste can be made from either ginger, cinnamon, or calamus powder and applied to the forehead, across the bridge of the nose and cheek bones. This will stimulate circulation. (47) (42).

Following a *kapha* pacifying routine during this time will be helpful, such as eating foods that warm, dry and light.

SURYAVARTA HEADACHE

***Nidana* (Cause)**

This type of headache is due to *pitta* vitiation, as described above, and can also be brought on by sudden life changes. (47)

Suryavarta (Migraine).

The *majja* dhatu site shows a strong jumping *pitta* spike, due to the heat created by high *pitta*, which causes the blood vessels to expand and press on the nerves, causing pain.

[Dr. Vasant Lad, Secrets of the Pulse, p 85]

***Rupa* (Symptoms)**

This type of headache becomes worse with exposure to the sun, and gets better when the sun goes down. According to the *Astanga Hridayam*, there is “severe throbbing pain in the temples, eyes [sic] brows and forehead.”

***Samprapti* (Pathology)**

According to Dr. Marc Halpern, *suryavarta* is a combination of *vata* and *pitta* vitiation, with *pitta* playing a more prominent role.

***Chikitsa* (Treatment)**

Treatment of *suryavarta* will follow the same protocol as that of *pitta* type headache.

TREATMENTS

Panchakarma - As migraine headache sufferers often show signs of toxic build-up and low *ojas*, *pancha karma* treatment may be warranted to help remove toxins from, and rejuvenate the body and re-establish doshic balance.

Herbs for Headaches – There are a variety of herbal treatments that are available from both western and Ayurvedic traditions.

Per Dr. Parmeshwar Arora, an *Ayurvedic* Expert, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi: Salt and ajwan in lukewarm water for instant relief. Ginger taken with black pepper or *pippali* and honey is also effective. Pea-sized camphor and *gur* cooked in desi *ghee* can be taken to ease a migraine attack. (9)

Anutaila - this is a medicated oil prepared by boiling 26 medicinal plants in sesame oil and goat milk. 10-20 drops of this medicated oil is dropped in each nostril and deeply inhaled. If properly inhaled, this oil removes the blockages of the nasal passages, the patient "feels light in his head and heaviness as well as mental strain is relieved. He gets good sleep and the nerves and nasal passages are soothed." This therapy should be used 2-3 times per day. During an acute attack, this therapy will bring instant relief. (13)

Shabindu Taila - This is a medicated oil for the treatment of migraine. Only about 6 drops are used, and is administered as the *anutaila*. This is prepared in mustard oil, which may irritate the mucous membranes of the nose, but provides instant relief. (13)

Suvarna Sutashekhara - this is a *bhasma* and is the "drug of choice" for treatment of migraine. It contains mercury, gold, copper, sulphur, borax, and some poisonous drugs as *vatsanabha* and *dhatura*. The ingredients are all processed in a manner that makes them free of adverse effects. This *bhasma* is mixed with ten more medicinal plants or drugs of animal origin and *bhringaraj* juice. This is given to the patient on an empty stomach twice daily with milk. This works both as a preventive and a cure. (13)

Godanti Bhasma - This is given to the patient in a dose of one gram, three times a day and mixed with honey. (13)

The following herbs have been in traditional western herbology in the treatment of headaches:

peppermint, rosemary, lavender, thyme, catnip, lady's mantle, marjoram, ginkgo, basil, lemon balm, ginger, chamomile flowers, parsley, valerian, bay leaf, willow bark, evening primrose, garlic, purslane, turmeric, tansy and feverfew.

Biofeedback - a technique that helps you to learn to relax and use your brain to gain control over certain body functions. If a migraine begins slowly, people can use biofeedback to remain calm and stop the attack. (22)

Visualization – the act of visualizing oneself in a calm and serene environment may ease headache pain by relaxing the body and decreasing blood pressure in the head. (46)

Meditation, Deep Breathing and Progressive Muscle Relaxation – all have a calming affect on the body, which may bring headache relief. (46)

Cervical Correction Device – many migraine sufferers are seen to have a loss in the normal curvature of the neck. Use of such a tool as a cervical correction device helps to restore normal curvature and offering relief to migraines. (7)

Reflexology – application of light pressure to select pressure points on the hands and feet may provide headache relief.

Cervical Manipulation and Massage – may both help to correct alignment and relieve the muscle tension that can create or aggravate migraines.

CONCLUSION

Migraine headaches are primarily a *vata* type condition, but can be either a dual *dosha* or even a *tridoshic* condition. Western and *Ayurvedic* preventative recommendations are parallel in the maintenance of proper habits and lifestyle practices such as the consumption of a proper diet and the maintenance of regular sleep and eating patterns. While the condition has no known cure, it can be greatly benefitted from these practices.

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