

Natural Remedies for Headaches

Natural remedies for common types of headaches

Not all headaches are created equal. There are many types of headaches that arise from different causes. Identifying the cause and removing it is the best way to not only relieve headaches but keep them from returning. Here is an introduction to some of the major types of headaches and some natural remedies that may help.

Tension Headaches

These are the most common type of headache. About 90% of people get tension headaches at some time in their lives. Tension headaches are triggered by stress, fatigue, poor posture, and muscle tension in the neck that puts pressure on spinal nerves going into the head. They may also be triggered by dehydration.



If you get frequent tension headaches, work on your stress management. You can also drink more water and take magnesium, which helps ease muscle tension. Working on your posture and getting bodywork to ease tension in your neck (massage, chiropractic care, stretching) will also help. Herbs that relax muscles and relieve stress, such as lavender, skullcap, wood betony, blue vervain, kava kava, lobelia, and black cohosh may also be helpful.

Migraine Headaches

Migraines are more debilitating and harder to treat than tension headaches. About 18% of all females and 6% of all males get migraines. Symptoms include light-headedness, throbbing pain (usually on one side of the head), nausea, dizziness, and sensitivity to light, sound and smell.



There is some evidence that migraines may be triggered by food allergies or sensitivities. They may also involve a congested liver, dehydration, magnesium deficiency, and emotional stress.

Watch out for triggering foods and eliminate them from the diet. Drink more water and take magnesium. As with tension headaches, massage therapy and chiropractic care may also help. Bitter herbs that aid digestion and help cleanse the liver, such as feverfew or wood betony, may also be helpful, but work best when taken regularly as preventatives. Other herbs that may be helpful include willow bark, butterbur, Jamaican dogwood, and periwinkle.

Cluster Headaches

These are intensely painful headaches that have an excruciating, knife-like pain behind or near one eye. Episodes typically last for 30 minutes to two hours, but they may repeat several times daily over the course of weeks. They often occur in the spring and fall during seasonal changes and 90% of sufferers are male.



They appear to be triggered by a dilation of the blood vessels causing excessive blood flow to the head, but may also be caused by subluxations in the neck causing nerve pressure. Alcohol, smoking, cold or hot air blowing across the face, and certain foods may trigger them.

Again bodywork in the form of massage or chiropractic adjustments may help, as can better hydration and magnesium. Other remedies that may be helpful include kudzu, melatonin, thiamine, kava kava, and skullcap.

Sinus Headaches

A sinus headache is caused by congestion and swelling of the sinuses or sinusitis. Possible remedies include sinus decongestants such as fenugreek and thyme, burdock, and goldenseal. A snuff made of goldenseal and bayberry rootbark may be helpful. Inhaling decongestant essential oils such as eucalyptus, pine, thyme, bay, and wintergreen may also be helpful.



Other Types of Headaches

Headaches can have many other causes, including high blood pressure, TMJ, dental abscesses, overexertion, hemorrhages, brain tumors, glaucoma, and brain infections. If headaches persist it's best to get checked out by a doctor to find out if problems like these are contributing to the headaches.

Selected References

Strategies for Health by Steven Horne

<https://draxe.com/health/natural-headache-remedies-relief/>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/headache/types-of-headaches>

<https://headaches.org/resources/the-complete-headache-chart/>

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