

## **Headache & it's Ayurvedic Management**

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If whole populations are studied, everybody in the world will experience a headache at some point of time. Except perhaps for common colds headache is one of the most frequent of human discomforts. One survey estimated that about 70% of the population would have at least one headache every three months. Some people have occasional headaches that resolve quickly, while others are debilitated.

There are three major categories of headaches:

### **Primary headaches,**

Primary headaches exist independent from any other medical condition, which mainly include migraine, tension headache, and cluster headaches. These types account for about 90% of all headaches.

### **Secondary headaches,**

Those are a result of an underlying medical issue or condition like brain disease, head trauma, infection, tumour, and metabolic disorder (e.g., diabetes, thyroid disease) etc.

### **Cranial neuralgias, facial pain, and other headaches**

Neuralgia means nerve pain. Inflammation of the nerves of head and upper neck leads to these types of headaches.

Tension headaches are the most common type of headache. Tension headache usually produces a dull, steady ache on both sides of the head. A feeling of pressure or tightness around the head is there as if a band were pulled tightly around it. As many as 90% of adults have had or will have tension headaches.

Migraine headaches are the second most common type of headache. Here the headache is unilateral (affecting one half of the head) and pulsating, lasting from 4 to 72 hours. An estimated 6% of men and up to 18% of women will experience a migraine headache.

Cluster headaches are a rare type of headache affecting 0.1% of the population. Headaches come in groups (clusters), may have up to 8 attacks per day, each lasting about 15 to 45 minutes or longer and is almost always on one side of the head.

Ayurveda describes about 11 types of headaches. Which are 1.Vataja 2.Pittaja 3.Kaphaja 4.Sannipataj 5.Raktaja 6.Krimija 7.Kshayaja 8.Shankhaka 9.Suryavarta 10.Anantvata & 11.Ardhavabhedaka. The classification is based upon the dosha/doshas\* involved in the particular type of headache and their respective clinical presentations.

There are many factors, which can cause or contribute to headache. These factors are called triggers. Triggers vary from person to person.

Foods, which contain tyramine, monosodium glutamate, sodium nitrite and caffeine, are known as common triggers. Withholding the urges to pass stools, urine, sneeze, cough and cry is considered as one of the important causes according to Ayurveda. Excessive mental stress, depression, anxiety, anger, excessive sorrow, excessive crying, daytime sleep, awakening at night, excesses intake of alcohol, smoking, intake of foods that are of sour test, skipping meals, talking in a very loud voice, excessive indulgence in sexual intercourse, bright lights, glare, sinus problems, excess noise, hormone fluctuations, changes in weather, medications, physical exertion, obesity and inactivity are some common known triggers.

*\*There are three Doshas in our body, namely Vata, Pitta & Kapha. So long as these Doshas are in a state of equilibrium with each other the person enjoys good health. When one /two/three of these Doshas get aggravated & vitiated, the equilibrium breaks down and physical or/and mental discomfort starts.*

### **Kerala Ayurveda 's 10 Tips for Headache**

1. Try to find out the triggers for your headache and avoid them. Keep a headache diary.
2. Eat regular meals & never avoid your breakfast.
3. Stick to a sleep schedule
4. Exercise regularly.
5. Practice Suryanamaskar, Bhujangasana, Pawana muktasana, savasana, kapalbhati and shitali pranayama.
6. Avoid caffeine, alcohol and tobacco
7. Manage your stress. Take some break from work and give some meaning full time to yourself.
8. Drink plenty of water and fluids and keep yourself always hydrated.
9. Whenever you have headache, place your index and middle fingers of both your hands over the outside edges of the eyebrows and between the ears and the forehead (Sankha marma). Then rub your fingers in small circles with a fair amount of pressure for one to two minutes. Then press your fingers and hold for 4 or 5 seconds and then release. Repeat the procedure till your headache gets relieved.
10. Apply cold or heat compress or both of them alternately to your forehead or the hurting part of your head. Which one of the above three gives you relief go for that.

### **Treatment provided at Kerala Ayurveda for Headache**

1. **Herbal Medications:** - Ayurveda physician selects medicines completely devoid of any side effect according to the aggravated Doshas and particular type of headache.
2. **Nasyam:-** The face, shoulders and chest are massaged with specific herbal oil and made to perspire. The herbal extracts/herbal oil in exact dose is measured and instilled into the nostrils, while inhaling. After this process the area around the nose, chest, palms and foot are massaged vigorously. This Ayurveda therapy can provide a miraculous remedy for headaches, congestion, allergies, sinusitis, rhinitis and other nasal infections.
3. **Shirodhara :-** Lukewarm herbal oil is poured in a continuous stream onto the forehead, while receiving a gentle massage on the head. Shirodhara rejuvenates and revitalizes the body and mind. This therapy is known to have a curative effect for headache, paralysis, insomnia, depression, anxiety, hypertension and other neurological malfunctions.
4. **Shirobasthy:-** Lukewarm medicinal herbal oil is poured into a cap fitted on the head. A great therapy for treating headache, paralysis, insomnia, depression, etc.
5. **Shirobhingam:-** Using Ayurveda techniques and a special medicated oil, this concentrated massage on the head, neck and face relieves stress and strain related headache.
6. **Lifestyle modification:** - Required lifestyle modification is suggested after taking a thorough history from the patient.