

Acupuncture Shows Possible Effect for Tension Headaches

Headaches affect millions of Americans. According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, about 45 million Americans suffer from chronic headaches. Tension-type headaches (or tension headaches)—characterized by pain or discomfort from tense or constricted muscles in the head, neck, or scalp—are one of the most common forms of headaches. In most patients, tension headaches occur infrequently and can be treated with over-the-counter pain medicine. However, some people experience these headaches several days per month, or even daily, and may benefit from other treatments.

A recent review published by the Cochrane Collaboration looked at the literature on acupuncture for tension headaches and analyzed the findings from 11 randomized trials with 2,317 participants that compared acupuncture with a control or with sham acupuncture.¹

The results of the literature review found that of the 11 studies:

- Two showed that patients who received acupuncture in addition to standard care had fewer headaches.
- Five found slightly better effects in patients who received true acupuncture compared with sham acupuncture.
- Three of the four trials that compared acupuncture with physiotherapy, massage, or relaxation had methodological shortcomings. Their findings were difficult to interpret, but acupuncture appeared to have slightly better results than these other therapies.

Overall, the researchers concluded that acupuncture could be a valuable option for patients suffering from frequent tension headaches.

Reference

- Linde K, Allais G, Brinkhaus B, et al. [Acupuncture for tension-type headache](#). *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*. 2009;(1):CD007587.