

Acupuncture for the Prevention of Tension-type Headaches



A 2016 research study published by the Cochrane Library concluded a course of six acupuncture treatments can be a viable option in the treatment of tension-type headaches. According to the study, participants treated with acupuncture and painkillers reported their headache frequency was less. This study was actually a compilation of several acupuncture trials. A total of 12 trials met the criteria to be included in this conclusive study. Acupuncture was also compared to several other modalities such as massage and physiotherapy, but the findings were inconclusive.

Tension headaches are not as debilitating as migraines, but they can occur much more frequently and they are the most common type of headache experienced. Stress tends to be the biggest factor regarding these types of headaches. Those who suffer

from tension headaches frequently report a feeling of their head being squeezed, with pressure around the forehead, temples and back of the head or neck. Tension headaches can last for as short as 30 minutes or they could linger for days.

While the exact cause of tension headaches is still not clear, they are most commonly attributed to muscle tension or spasms of the head, face, scalp or jaw. Tension headaches are considered chronic if a person experiences them 15 or more days per month for several months. The most common treatment for tension headaches is over-the-counter medications like ibuprofen or aspirin. Severe cases are sometimes treated with prescription drugs, but they tend to fail because they do not address the root cause of the headaches.

Traditional Chinese Medicine is known for locating and treating the root cause of any ailment, including tension headaches. One of the ways TCM treats the root is by identifying personal triggers that create tension-type headaches. The licensed acupuncturist plays the role of a detective when treating patients. Acupuncturists usually ask multiple questions regarding the symptoms of any illness, including tension-type headaches. This allows for proper diagnosis and treatments. This can also give the patient insight into why the headaches keep occurring and how they can eliminate some of the triggers.

TCM includes more than just acupuncture. Herbal formulas, accessory modalities such as cupping or tuina and even relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation or qi gong are a part of TCM. Acupuncture itself provides headache relief with a great deal of success. As few as one or two needles can be sufficient in stopping tension-type headaches. Acupuncture is also very effective at providing relief from stress and anxiety, two of the most common triggers of tension-type headaches. By adding in herbs and accessory modalities, the patient then has the tools needed to counter oncoming headaches on a long-term basis. The acupuncture treatments then become a type of maintenance to keep the headaches at bay.

A person suffering from tension-type headaches could benefit greatly from regular acupuncture treatments. If you are one of the nearly 1.4 billion people that suffer regularly from tension-type headaches, locating a licensed acupuncturist in your area may be the best decision you can make.

New York Sports Acupuncture

744 St. John's Place

Brooklyn, NY 11216

888.375.5444

www.nysportsacu.com

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