



An Herbalist's View- Headaches

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Headaches are a very common problem. A majority of people will experience at least one major headache yearly while a substantial number of others will suffer through many more than this. Headaches decrease the quality of life for numerous people who are constrained by the pain and disorientation of these events. Headaches are a symptom rather than the problem itself, and are generally a referred pain originating from various body origins. They can indicate a serious disorder such as a tumor or cerebral hemorrhage but much more commonly they are a symptom unrelated to the brain or any serious disorder. The brain is basically insensitive to pain; hence headaches are rarely an indication of any problem there. They are a sign that something is amiss somewhere, whether it's a pathophysiological or constitutional dilemma. This suggests that when treating headaches, especially chronic, it is imperative to look for its underlying cause. By just relieving the pain, a causal pathology may worsen. Relieving the pain is still a primary objective, but the reason for the headache will still need to be addressed.

Headaches are notoriously hard to treat. Their origins are often mysterious and a surfeit of reasons may lead to this vexing problem. Unfortunately, even after an efficacious remedy is found, its effectiveness often seems to wane quickly. This is not meant to discourage remedial attempts, but to let practitioners know that this situation commonly occurs. Any relief one offers may make an appreciable difference in a headache sufferer's life. An important point for herbal practitioners to take into account is to remember that we often see people who have taken many medical routes before 'resorting' to an herbalist. This often makes for difficult cases, but herbal medicine coupled with a good evaluation may prove successful.

Another problem herbalists need to address is evaluating the virtues of using herbs with strong sedative qualities when it is difficult to reduce the headache itself. The problem that lies here is common when treating any debilitating pain. You can generally give herbs that are strong enough to reduce the sensation of pain, but these often interfere with cognitive function. And as someone with reoccurring headaches still needs to continue with their daily activities, strong sedatives herbs may make them groggy and decrease their ability to function well. It is a trade-off between their feeling pain and being able to conduct their daily activities satisfactorily.

Types of Headaches

The below list of is a non-inclusive, somewhat random listing of headache categories. It is intended to introduce a number of headache types based on both modern pathophysiology concepts and on wholistic constitutional models.

In the realm of medical pathophysiology there are broadly two major categories of headaches, tension and vascular. These two types are the most likely seen on a day-to-day basis. The list below names a number of headache types, many others were left off for brevity's sake.

Many headaches are idiopathic, without a known cause, the symptoms and triggers being specific to an individual. While they are sometimes classifiable, they often fall on the margins or outside defined categories.

Within the constitutional model, the medical diagnosis may be taken into account but the focus is on examining the individual and looking for patterns such as excesses or deficiencies that may be creating the imbalances leading to the headache (see *Constitutional polarities*).

1. **Allergic response**- induce headaches by several mechanisms including release of inflammatory chemicals and changes in vasculature. The pain is often of a boggy, full and dull nature, especially in the later allergic stages.
2. **Altitude headache**- very common at higher elevations, often associated with other altitude problems such as lethargy and sleeplessness. Remedies include descending to a lower elevation and chewing Ligusticum root. They will generally decrease before long with time and acclimation.
3. **Brain tumors**- though brain tumors can cause headaches the vast majority of headaches are not brain tumors. Tumors are serious and not easy to tell apart from other types of headaches. If a tumor is suspected, imaging with an MRI or CT scan is necessary to determine whether one exists.
4. **Bacterial and viral infection**- infections may bring on headaches as seen with food poisoning (bacterial) or influenza (viral). Treatment is based on palliative remedies such as antiinflammatories for the pain while treating the infection.
5. **Cluster headaches**- these are characteristically acute, very painful, and the individual headaches are of short duration. They generally take place a few times a day, and occur in clusters for several weeks. While they are not common, they make life difficult for the people who have them. They are a vascular type headache.
6. **Constitutional excesses or deficiencies**- these are a common type of constitutional imbalance, which may lead to a number of different types of headaches. Excesses and deficiencies are a good place to begin to explore an individual's constitutional disparity. One method of determining in which of these two realms the problems lies is to find out whether the headache improves or feels worse after a bowel movement. If the headache is of an excess nature it will often feel better after a bowel movement and one of a deficient nature may worsen. As with most constitutional-based problems, the remedies try to bring the disharmony back to balance. This includes using herbs such as nutritive herbs for deficiencies and reducing herbs for excesses.
7. **Dehydration**- a common cause of headaches outdoors. Ask people how much water they have recently drank, especially if outdoors. Ask them also to distinguish water

from other beverages such as soda or coffee. They should initially drink water slowly as drinking water too quickly can cause an upset stomach and temporarily aggravate the headache.

8. **Digestive problems-** while not widely acknowledged in medical books, a wide range of digestive irregularities cause headaches. They are often easier to assess and treat in a constitutional picture rather than a stricter pathophysiological model. Constipation is a source of headaches, potentially from absorbed toxic products. When working with idiosyncratic headaches consider treating any anomaly in their digestive tract.
9. **Exertion headaches-** headaches may be caused by extra physical exertion. Relaxation is important and will generally help diminish headache symptoms promptly.
10. **Eye related-** a number of situations may cause headaches including straining, excessive light exposure and driving. Eye relaxation may help as well as understanding the cause and preparing for it.
11. **Facial pain-** a range of facial pains can cause headaches. These include temporomandibular (tmj) joint pain, tooth abscesses and ear infections.
12. **Head trauma-** brain injury may occur from direct damage as with a fall or automobile accident. Headaches after any kind of accident should be suspect for this. A skilled diagnosis and medical supervision are important here as there may be occult cerebral damage.
13. **Hormonal fluctuations-** seen primarily in women, hormonal changes may bring on headaches especially pre-menstrually and during the first trimester of pregnancy. Birth control drugs may also cause headaches.
14. **Hypertension-** in general it is not very common for high blood pressure to cause reoccurring headaches, though it is more common with blood pressures elevated above 200/110. Medical research has not found any definitive reason why people with elevated high blood pressure experience headaches, though it appears that anxiety may play a role. High blood pressure medicines can induce headaches.
15. **Lack of food-** many people develop headaches if they are without food for a certain (sometimes a relatively short) amount of time. These people are sensitive to small fluctuations of hunger and it is more common in women. The headaches are generally non-severe and happen along with other symptoms such as wandering mind and/or muddled thoughts. Eating will generally help within 15 minutes. This condition is sometimes called hypoglycemia, though it may not technically be so.
16. **Meningitis** (infection of the meninges)- may cause severe headaches with stiff neck and fever. A medical diagnosis is necessary here.
17. **Migraines-** one of the most common and disruptive forms of headaches. They are classified as vascular headaches due to the changes in cerebral blood flow, though the importance, and whether this is the cause of the headaches, is uncertain. Symptoms include: nausea, vomiting, photophobia, lightheadedness, scalp tenderness, diarrhea, visual disturbances, and other neurological disturbances. There are many triggers for migraines, some common ones include: red wine, hunger, menses, lack of sleep, glare, excess stress and strong smells. Migraine may

be preceded by an aura- a change of perception in the visual field. They are notoriously hard to treat.

18. **Rebound headache**- this is caused by regular daily use of aspirin, acetaminophen and other pain-relieving medicines. When the use of these medicines are discontinued a painful rebound headache occurs. These can last for days or weeks. Taking medicines for acute pain rather than on a continuous basis will prevent this problem from taking root.
19. **Sinus headaches**- Irritation or infection of the nasal mucous membrane may cause localized headaches often behind the eyes and felt around the forehead and sinuses. Treatment consists of killing causative organisms and using decongestants.
20. **Stress headaches**- these headaches develop during times of emotional stress such as giving a public speech or a job interview. Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing are helpful. Nervine and sedative herbs may also alleviate pain.
21. **Substance use and/or its withdrawal**- many imbibed substances can cause headaches. Some of these affect a broad swath of people, while others have reactions to items that generally don't cause problems. Conversely the withdrawal of certain products may also lead to headaches. Below are some of the more common culprits of both categories.
 - Alcohol- causes a variety of headaches, particularly hangovers.
 - Tobacco- withdrawal of tobacco after habituation often causes headaches
 - Marijuana- morning-after type headaches
 - Ice cream- can cause headaches in sensitive individuals
 - Caffeine- both use and withdrawal may cause headache.
 - Red wine- causes headaches, migraines and flushing in some people.
22. **Systemic illness**- almost any illness may cause headaches. Some of the more common ones include; mononucleosis, SLE, Hashimoto's thyroiditis, irritable bowel disease and many of the complications from HIV.
23. **Temporal arteritis**- blood vessels supplying the head and neck often become inflamed in the elderly and can cause headaches. If first time headaches begin in people over 50, temporal arteritis should be considered, and medically diagnosed.
24. **Tension headaches**- these are the most common form of headache and the type a majority people may occasionally experience. The term tension here refers to the sensation of the pain felt, as this form of headache has a typical constricting (tense) feeling. It is often described as "vice like". While they are called tension headaches, they are not necessarily brought on by excess stress, though this can be a contributing factor. Tension headaches are associated with fatigue, caffeine, alcohol, certain foods and lack of food among other triggers. Many of the headaches in this list fall under the heading of tension headache. The exact mechanisms of these headaches are not well understood.
25. **Vascular headaches**-the second most important group of headaches. These are associated with changes of the blood vessels supplying the head. Migraine and cluster headaches are categorized as vascular type. Like tension headaches, the mechanics of vascular headaches are poorly understood.

General Triggers-the quick list

This is a short list of some of the more common causes of episodic headaches.

1. Alcohol
2. Allergies
3. Birth control pills
4. Caffeine withdrawal
5. Dehydration
6. Diet
7. Depression
8. Drugs- a wide variety
9. Eyestrain- (cars, computers, etc.)
10. Hormonal fluctuations
11. Hunger
12. Injury and inflammation
13. Muscle tension
14. Sinus infection
15. Sleep-lack of
16. Smells
17. Stress- physiological, physical, mental, emotional
18. Tight jaw

Guidelines

📖 **One-drop dosage.** When administering herbs for any kind of acute pain, start with a one-drop (or less) dosage. With this low dosage you can observe, and ask the painee, whether the medicine is helping, not making a difference, or worsening the pain. With stronger medicines (i.e., Atropa) use a smaller 'checking out' dosage by putting one drop in a few ounces of water and give one drop from this dilute mixture

📖 **Ask questions.** Make sure to ask people with acute headache pain a few vital questions before proceeding with giving remedies. At the same time be sensitive to the fact that answering questions may not be one of the things that they want to be doing at that painful moment. So in a non-headache aggravating voice, ask a few pointed questions to help determine the remedial course of action.

→ **Some questions to ask before treatment**

- ✓ Is this your first headache? (It is a significant sign if they are having their first bad headache)
- ✓ How often do you get headaches? Does this one feel typical in intensity, location or other detectable patterns?
- ✓ What has helped in the past? Medicine, relaxation, massage, exercise or any other pain relieving technique?
- ✓ What has made the pain worsen?
- ✓ When asking about substances that someone may have used to ease their pain, make sure to give wide latitude in their answer to include any remedial agents. They may self-medicate using a variety of substances that they may not deem important, so ask pointedly if they use products such as ginger ale, coffee, Cannabis or anything else that may help with the pain.

📖 **Treating chronic headaches.** With chronic reoccurring headaches it becomes even more important to seek out the root cause(s) contributing to the headaches. The strategy is to help both the current acute pain and treat the underlying pathology to help relieve further episodes. Not that this is easy; it may take a while of looking at patterns and trying a range of herbal medicines while looking at eliminating triggers and building native strength.

Discerning Headache Patterns

There are number of ways to attempt to discern the cause and nature of a headache. These include the below observational and questioning techniques.

1. **Location-** ask the client to point or hold their head on where they feel the pain. Stay with this task awhile as knowing the location of the headache may offer insightful clues to its origin or constitutional type
2. **Times-** when does the pain feel worse and better? Which hours of the day, month, year, season, weather or preceding event?
3. **Intensity-** does it vary from any notable inputs?
4. **Diet Triggers-** many headaches are caused by various foods and beverages. Try to pinpoint any specific type of food that is associated with the pain. Have them keep a food journal to look for patterns.
5. **Diet Deficiencies-** see if there are any elements of their diet that they are deficient in. Lack of protein is a common cause of food related headaches.
6. **Triggers-** this is an important aspect as removing a vector can be the single most useful aspect of treatment. Tracking them can be frustrating for both patient and practitioner, as many causes are far from apparent.
7. **Allergic reactions-** many allergies can bring on headaches, mainly dull, low level throbbing types. Inquire whether they have any obvious allergic reactions to inhaled substances including pollen, molds, dander, etc. Are they subject to allergic rashes or have strong reactions to food or drugs?
8. **Pulse taking-** there are a number of methods of taking pulses as an assessment tool. These include the techniques employed by practitioners of Western clinical herbalism, Traditional Chinese medicine and Ayurveda. Taking the pulse can help discern a wide array of patterns.
9. **Tongue diagnosis-** as with pulse taking, there are a number of methods of reading the tongue. The tongue may offer additional insights into the underlying pathology.
10. **Other symptoms-** sometimes a headache dulls out all other pain occurring simultaneously. The other associated pain may offer further clues, such as with a headache occurring with stomach pain with only the headache pain being noticed.

Constitutional Approaches

Constitutional evaluation and individual-based treatment is an efficacious approach for both chronic and episodic headaches. In this context there is no limit to the categories of herbs or other treatments that may be helpful. The origin of the headache may be stemming from a number of single or multifactorial roots, hence the herbalist needs to think beyond headache remedies to treat the source(s) of the ailment. Below are some evaluative methods for assessing some of the underpinnings that may lead to headache pain. As with all constitutional techniques, look to make connections between other health issues that the person is experiencing. Since headaches are most commonly referred pain, there is a good chance that other corresponding symptoms exist.

Constitutional polarities

The below paired terms form a basis for a constitutional therapeutic approach. This mode consists of determining which side of the polarity the client and their symptoms are more aligned to. To use the temperature polarities as an example, one would try to determine whether the person and/or their symptoms leans more towards hot or cold. Since this is an energetic model, it is more of a conceptualization rather than based in a scientific-based measurable model. To put headaches into the context of temperature, by characterization hot headaches tend to be acute, with hot or burning sensations, often with sharp shooting pains. If the headache is colder in nature, the pain may feel duller, boggy, deeper and chronic. The person with the headache can also be viewed as having a hot or cold nature judging by their physical makeup and their temperament. That said, these are generalizations and people are rarely on the outside edge of either pole, but within the shades between. By careful questioning and observation it is possible to tease out on which side of the constitutional equation they incline.

The value of this approach lies in that after determining where someone's underlying problem sits, the orientation of the treatment can focus on pulling them back towards the center by using herbs and therapies that lie closer to the opposite end. An example would be giving cayenne in small doses if an ailment tended towards the cold spectrum.

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|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Active vs. Lethargic | 7. Hypertonic vs. Hypotonic |
| 2. Acute vs. Chronic | 8. Sthenic vs. Asthenic |
| 3. Anabolic vs. Catabolic | 9. Sudden onset vs. Long-time coming on |
| 4. Excess vs. Deficiency | 10. Surface vs. Deep |
| 5. Exogenous vs. Endogenous | 11. Wet vs. Dry |
| 6. Hot vs. Cold | 12. Windy vs. Stagnant |

Ayurvedic constitutional framework of headaches

In Ayurveda, people are divided into three main types called doshas. They are Vata, Pitta, and Kapha and each one has a tendency towards certain types of headaches. The remedies look to correct imbalances that are often inherent in these doshas. Some specific medicines may be applicable for all three doshas, such as the salicylates and other antiinflammatories. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explain the principles of Ayurveda but the below examples are for those familiar with them.

Vata

Symptoms

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|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Digestive-associated pain | 5. Sensation overload |
| 2. Emotional distress | 6. Sudden onset |
| 3. Nervousness | 7. Superficial (top of head) |
| 4. Pain-comes and goes | 8. Windy-moves around |

Triggers for Vata headaches

1. Many triggers are possible due to the heightened sensitivity of Vata.
2. Constitutional deficiencies lead to a generally weakened state increasing the possibilities of headaches.
3. Their nervous system is especially vulnerable – anxiety, stress and sudden changes are likely triggers.
4. Digestive- Vata types tend to have vulnerable digestion and any digestive problems may lead to headaches.
5. Lack of sleep- Vataians often have fitful sleep and are prone to waking up often. This lack of sleep may lead to a run-down jittery state.
6. Caffeine and other stimulants push the nervous system.
7. Environmental triggers- Vataians (especially when out of balance) are easily set off by stimuli such as light, heat, noise, smells, tastes and general sensory overload.

Therapies for Vata

1. Lay down in a dark, quiet, non-odiferous room
2. Herbs that damp down the sensorium
3. Use herbal medicines in small amounts to not overwhelm senses
4. Be cautious of the alcohol in tinctures
5. Tonification- use anabolic and building herbs
6. Nutrition plays a key role in Vata stability

Categories of Remedies

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Adaptogens | 5. Mood-alterers |
| 2. Anxiolytics | 6. Nervines |
| 3. Demulcents | 7. Sedatives |
| 4. Hypnotics | |

Herbs

Be cautious with the amounts and types of herbs as Vata is easily over-stimulated.

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|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Acorus | 11. Lavandula |
| 2. Anemone | 12. Matricaria |
| 3. Avena | 13. Melissa |
| 4. Centella | 14. Mentha |
| 5. Dioscorea | 15. Ocimum |
| 6. Eleutherococcus | 16. Parthenium |
| 7. Filipendula | 17. Passiflora |
| 8. Ginkgo | 18. Rosmarinus |
| 9. Glycyrrhiza | 19. Salix |
| 10. Hypericum | 20. Scutellaria |

Pitta

Symptoms

1. Heat
2. Inflammation
3. Red in the face
4. Pain-sharp, tight
5. Specific area of head

Triggers for Pitta headaches

1. Anger aggravates Pitta leading to 'stress' headaches.
2. Headaches often have an inflammatory character.
3. A tendency towards holding back thoughts and feelings and trying to control situations
4. Lack of sleep- Pitta types may have trouble falling asleep as they mull over events in their mind. There is also a pattern of waking up around 4:00 am ('liver time') and not being able to fall back asleep.
5. Muscle tension- Pittarians often clench their muscles, especially the shoulders and neck, and jaws.
6. Spices and spicy foods
7. Hypertension and elevated blood pressure

Therapies for Pitta

1. Antiinflammatories
2. Aromatherapy
3. Bitters
4. Counseling
5. Liver tonics
6. Nervines
7. Playful diversions
8. Relaxing exercises
9. Sedatives
10. Skeletal muscle relaxants
11. Tension relievers

Herbs

1. Actaea (Cimicifuga)
2. Cannabis
3. Chionanthus
4. Curcuma
5. Epipactis
6. Humulus
7. Lactuca
8. Piper
9. Passiflora
10. Salicylate herbs
11. Scutellaria
12. Stachys
13. Valeriana
14. Verbena

Kapha

Symptoms

1. Chronic
2. Cloying
3. Cold
4. Damp
5. Deep
6. Dull
7. Long-lasting
8. Stagnant
9. Thick
10. Whole head

Triggers for Kapha headaches

1. Kapha tends towards lethargy and sluggishness. Headaches can be brought on when this propensity is out of balance, so most therapies are stimulating to move the stagnation.
2. Hot muggy weather- heat can build up inside the Kaphic frame.
3. Lack of exercise
4. Heavy foods-especially fatty and oily
5. Excessive dairy
6. Cold food and drinks
7. Constipation
8. Depression

Therapies

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Aromatherapy- stimulating | 7. Exercise |
| 2. Astringents | 8. Laxatives |
| 3. Bitters | 9. Salicylates |
| 4. Depression relieving | 10. Stimulate body systems in general |
| 5. Dispersing remedies | 11. Stimulate digestion in particular |
| 6. Diuretics | 12. Warming and heating remedies |

Herbs

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Achillea | 9. Ginkgo |
| 2. Betula | 10. Ilex |
| 3. Camellia | 11. Myrica |
| 4. Capsicum | 12. Salix |
| 5. Centella | 13. Thea |
| 6. Coffea | 14. Zanthoxylum |
| 7. Curcuma | 15. Zingiber |
| 8. Filipendula | |

Therapeutic Categories

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Adaptogen | 14. Constitutional remedy |
| 2. Allergen withdrawal | 15. Demulcent |
| 3. Analgesic | 16. Diuretic |
| 4. Anti-hangover | 17. Food elimination |
| 5. Antihistamine | 18. Hormonal alterative |
| 6. Antiinflammatory | 19. Hypnotics |
| 7. Anxiolytic | 20. Liver tonic |
| 8. Aromatherapy | 21. Laxative |
| 9. Astringent | 22. Nervine |
| 10. Bitters | 23. Salicylates |
| 11. Caffeine replacement | 24. Skeletal muscle relaxant |
| 12. Cerebro-constrictor | 25. Vulnerary |
| 13. Cerebro-dilator | |

Categories of Medicines

Anti-allergy - these herbs are useful with headaches associated with allergic reactions such as seasonal allergies with sinus congestion, itchy eyes, and hive rashes. Some have antihistamine-like action.

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|------------------|---------------|
| 1) Ambrosia | 3) Euphrasia |
| 2) Chrysanthemum | 4) Parthenium |

Antiinflammatories- one of the most useful categories of herbs as inflammation is a common component of headaches. They are further subdivided into specific categories.

Antiinflammatories- Salicylate containing herbs- these herbs contain differing amounts and compositions of salicylates. Other plants also contain salicylates but these below are common and contain enough for a therapeutic dose.

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|----------------|------------|
| 1) Betula | 4) Populus |
| 2) Filipendula | 5) Salix |
| 3) Gaultheria | 6) Spiraea |

Antiinflammatories- Non salicylate containing- some of these are mucilaginous and others have corticosteroid-like effects. They are generally soothing to the digestive tract.

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|--------------|----------------|
| 1) Althaea | 5) Glycyrrhiza |
| 2) Anaphalis | 6) Matricaria |
| 3) Curcuma | 7) Zingiber |
| 4) Dioscorea | |

Cerebro-dilators- are useful for headaches due to cerebro-constriction. Some of these herbs have strong dilating properties and should be used with caution especially for people with vascular disorders. Start with a one-drop dose.

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|-------------|---------------|
| 1) Centella | 4) Rosmarinus |
| 2) Clematis | 5) Vinca |
| 3) Ginkgo | |

Liver Tonics- certain types of headaches are due to decreased liver function. Many bitter herbs stimulate liver activity and increasing its efficiency.

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|----------------|------------|
| 1) Achillea | 4) Silybum |
| 2) Chionanthus | 5) Verbena |
| 3) Curcuma | |

Nervines and Sedatives- these two important categorical terms are in continuum with each other. In general *nervines* have a nourishing action on the

nervous system while *sedatives* give a more immediate calming effect. These terms are fluid and the actions of both are largely influenced by the sensitiveness of the taker and the dosage and form used.

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|------------------|-----------------|
| 1) Cannabis | 8) Lobelia |
| 2) Epipactis | 9) Matricaria |
| 3) Eschscholtzia | 10) Passiflora |
| 4) Ethanol | 11) Piper |
| 5) Humulus | 12) Scutellaria |
| 6) Lactuca | 13) Valerian |
| 7) Lavandula | |

Skeletal Muscle Relaxants- headaches may be caused by tense muscles, particularly the neck, shoulders and jaw. These herbs are more effective when used in conjunction with muscle relaxing exercises.

- 1) Actaea
- 2) Pedicularis
- 3) Piper

Non-Herbal Treatments for Headaches

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|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Hydration | 5. Reduce sensory stimuli |
| 2. Massage | 6. Sleep and rest |
| 3. Nutritional support | 7. Structural manipulation |
| 4. Pressure points | |

The Headache First Aid Kit

This section is a round-up of herbs that I would include in a first aid kit specifically for headaches. It is not a comprehensive list but includes the remedies I find most useful in the field. Important- before giving any of the below (or any) remedies test with a one-drop dosage to make sure the medicine does not exacerbate the pain. With acute headache pain, it is possible to see a subtle shift in the pain after trying one drop to that may either lessen or increase intensity. The following dosages are very generalized and peoples' reaction to herbal medicines varies extraordinarily so please use these only as a basic guideline. Practice with low doses initially to do the least harm. The doses for the tinctures below are described in drops and milliliters (ml.). A dropper from a standard 1 ounce (30 ml) tincture bottle contains 1 milliliter (ml.) when fully filled. The reason to make the distinction between a dropper and 1 ml. is due to the vagaries of how much fluid the dropper will hold from the average squeeze that people generally give tincture bottles.

1. **Actaea (Cimicifuga) tincture**- Black Cohosh is my preferred skeletal muscle relaxant. It is especially useful if the headache comes in with their

shoulders bunched up or the headache happened after a recent accident and there is a lot of muscle tension. Actaea is sometimes useful with a frontal (forehead) headache. In this it is peculiar because it can also cause this same type of pain. Test with one-drop to be sure it does not aggravate a frontal headache. Dose lightly; start with (after checking with one drop) 5 drops and work your way up to 15 drops. Usually if this amount doesn't help, neither will larger doses. Take 5-15 drops as often as needed.

2. **Clematis tincture**-Clematis is an intriguing and specific remedy for cerebro-constricted headaches. That is to say that it is a cerebro-dilator or functions similarly in action. I use a number of wild Clematis species to prepare the tincture utilizing the fresh aboveground parts. People with these headaches have the appearance of scrunching up their head or trying to make their head smaller to avoid the pain. Clematis is a toxic herb and needs to be used cautiously. Here comes the admonition again; use the one-drop dosage. To give too much Clematis for the wrong kind of headache is to risk the life-long ire of the person whose pain you've just spiked. Dosage; commonly 1 drop will show up as helping or not. If it does, use 5-10 drops as needed. For whom Clematis helps it is a boon, as it is often one of the few herbs that helps these headaches. (A tip of the hat to Michael Moore for this one).
3. **Euphrasia tincture**- Eyebright is for headaches associated with allergies. Look for classic allergic reactions such as itchy puffy eyes, runny nose, and other symptoms. Learn to differentiate allergies from viral infections (i.e., the common cold) which both cause sniffles. This is a safe herb rarely aggravating pain or causing unwanted effects. Dose; ½- 2 ml. as needed.
4. **Filipendula tincture and/or tea**- Meadowsweet is a safe useful all-purpose antiinflammatory. It is especially suited for headaches stemming from infection and digestive disorders, but can be tried safely for about any headache. The tea is better for headaches originating from digestive maladies. Dose; ½-2 ml. as needed.
5. **Matricaria tea and/or tincture**- Chamomile is a safe, pleasant-enough tasting tea and tincture. Its virtue lies in both those qualities, and its stress reducing and gut-appeasing properties. Its classic distinctions still stand-bellyaches and nervousness. If these are causing your headache, try Matricaria. Dose; Tea- try to find high quality herb and steep a good ½ handful in a covered jar to keep those relaxing essential oils in the water. Tincture-anywhere from 10 drops to 3 ml as necessary.
6. **Salix tincture**- for a long time, I didn't feel Willow lived up to its name and storied history. That's behind me now. Salix has a well-deserved place in the headache-reducing pantheon as a tincture as well as its famous constituents-

the salicylates. That said, it is not aspirin and its indications are not as generalized as its synthesized bastard offspring. I find it useful when the headache pain is not too intense and it's hard to pinpoint its source. It is also good for people who rarely get headaches (lucky them). Dose; It may be necessary to use moderately large doses of Salix tincture to conjure its effect, approximately ½- 3 ml as needed. I have, out of necessity, had people chew the bark and leaf, and surprisingly have occasionally seen that work.

7. **Scutellaria tincture**- Skullcap wiggles its way into a host of ailments, likely due its quieting effect on the nervous system. The same is true as a headache remedy, use it when nervousness and stress (say, giving a public speech) play a role in causing the headache pain. It is also a serviceable muscle relaxant. Like many herbal medicines, Scutellaria works as a charm for some while it seems to have little effect on others. Dose; Idiosyncratic in effect. For those that it does influence, small amounts may be sufficient while others will need 2-5 ml. If the fresh plant is around try chewing it or prepare a tea.
8. **Tanacetum tincture**- Feverfew is perhaps the most famous plant for headaches due to a series of scientific clinical trials performed over the last decade. These were mostly aimed at treating migraines as the plant has this as its reputation. While the studies had varied results (no surprise there) the tincture is a useful adjunct for migraines. The key in helping migraines is to use the plant as a preventative at the first sense of the headache coming on. The earlier the better. While it may only work with a small percentage of people that warrants its place in the first aid kit. Unfortunately, I have not seen much success using herbs after the migraine headaches are full on. Hypnotics and comfortable surroundings may be your best choice then. Dose; ½- 1 ml as necessary. Some of the studies have indicated that chewing the fresh leaf daily helped prevent attacks.
9. **Valeriana tincture**- Valerian is a valuable and unpredictable sedative hypnotic. My preferred form is a fresh root tincture. It is not so much for headaches but rather to help the headache sleep or space out. Caution- I have probably seen more unwanted effects from Valeriana than any other commonly used herb (excluding coffee, etc.). Its contra-effect is the opposite of its intended use, it causes excitability and agitation. Not so nice if your giving it to relax. Again, this is an important herb to initially try one drop and then administer anywhere from 5 drops to 3 ml. Large doses of Valerian may cause drug-like hangovers, and the dose that may help somebody get over the pain and fall sleep may be the hangover dose. Let them know if they are taking a large dose or in sensitive individuals.

10. **Aspirin and Non-steroidal antiinflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)-**

While it may be deemed herbally incorrect to list these, by virtue of utility they are included here. NSAIDs include acetaminophen and ibuprofen. Though they do have side effects and are not wildcrafted or organically grown they can often help. I prefer aspirin over NSAIDs due its long history of use and general safety record, but it does upset people's stomach where an alternative may not. Commonly, when working at first aid stations, someone clearly in headache pain will approach me and ask for an aspirin or NSAID. I usually will offer them a choice between herbs and these drugs. This is after quickly ruling out a dehydration or 'non-aspirin helping' type headache. I give them whichever one they want at the time. If they are unsure, I will try one of the various herbal remedies listed in this paper after sussing out which would be most appropriate.

Materia Medica List

- 1) *Achillea millefolium*- Yarrow
- 2) *Aconitum columbianum*- Aconite
- 3) *Acorus calamus*- Calamus
- 4) *Actaea (Cimicifuga) racemosa*- Black cohosh
- 5) *Althaea officinalis*- Marshmallow
- 6) *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*- Ragweed
- 7) *Anemone* spp.- Anemone
- 8) *Atropa belladonna*- Belladonna
- 9) *Avena sativa*- Wild oats
- 10) *Betula lenta*- Black birch
- 11) *Centella asiatica*- Gotu kola
- 12) *Coffea arabica*- Coffee
- 13) *Camellia sinensis*- Tea
- 14) *Cannabis* spp.- Marijuana
- 15) *Chionanthus virginicum*- Fringe tree
- 16) *Chrysanthemum* spp- Chrysanthemum
- 17) *Clematis* spp.- Clematis
- 18) *Curcuma* spp.- Turmeric
- 19) *Dioscorea villosa*- Wild yam
- 20) *Epipactis helleborine*- Epipactis
- 21) *Eleutherococcus senticosus*- Siberian ginseng
- 22) *Eschscholtzia* spp.- California poppy
- 23) *Euphrasia* spp.- Eyebright
- 24) *Filipendula ulmaria*- Meadowsweet
- 25) *Gaultheria procumbens*- Wintergreen
- 26) *Gelsemium sempervirens*- Gelsemium
- 27) *Ginkgo biloba*- Ginkgo
- 28) *Glycyrrhiza* spp.- Licorice
- 29) *Humulus lupulus*- Hops
- 30) *Hypericum perforatum*- St. Johnswort
- 31) *Ilex paraguariensis*- Yerba mate
- 32) *Lactuca* spp. Wild lettuce
- 33) *Lavandula* spp. Lavender
- 34) *Leonurus cardiaca*- Motherwort
- 35) *Lobelia inflata*- Lobelia
- 36) *Matricaria recutita*- Chamomile
- 37) *Melissa officinalis*- Lemon balm
- 38) *Mentha x piperita* – Peppermint
- 39) *Myrica* spp.-Bayberry
- 40) *Passiflora incarnata*- Passionflower
- 41) *Pedicularis groenlandica*-Elephanthead
- 42) *Pedicularis* spp.- Lousewort
- 43) *Piper methysticum*- Kava kava
- 44) *Populus* spp.- Poplar
- 45) *Rosmarinus* spp.- Rosemary
- 46) *Salix* spp.- Willow
- 47) *Scutellaria lateriflora*- Skullcap
- 48) *Silybum marianum*- Milk thistle
- 49) *Spiraea* spp- Spiraea
- 50) *Stellaria media*- Chickweed
- 51) *Stachys* spp.- Wood betony
- 52) *Tanacetum parthenium*- Feverfew
- 53) *Valeriana officinalis*- Valerian
- 54) *Verbena hastata*- Blue vervain
- 55) *Verbena officinalis*- Great verbena
- 56) *Vinca* spp.- Periwinkle