



Northwest

INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

Headache Treatment: Hydrotherapy

What causes headaches?

Most people experience headaches at some point in their lives. In fact 5-10% of the US population seeks medical help for their headaches. Most headaches are caused by either muscle tension or temporary changes in blood circulation in the brain. Common triggers for the muscle tension that can lead to these headaches are stress, joint misalignment in the neck or jaw, emotional factors, and poor posture. Triggers for headaches caused by changes in blood flow are often food allergies, poor blood sugar regulation, fatigue, hormonal changes, alcohol, chemicals, and toxins.

Naturopaths often use the application of hot and cold water to change blood flow and release muscle tension. The following protocols can help to relieve headaches whether they are of muscular or vascular origin.

Materials Needed

2 small towels

1 ice pack or tray of ice cubes

2 basins or large bowls
water

Migraine Headache

Fill one basin with ice water and the other with hot tap water (no greater than 114° F). Soak one towel in the ice water, then wring out the towel from the ice water. Place the towel on the back of the neck, switching out cold towels regularly, while soaking the feet in the basin of hot tap water for 20 minutes. If this does not bring relief then soak one towel in the hot water. Place the hot wrung towel on the back of the neck and soak the feet in the basin of iced water for 20 minutes.

Tension Headache

Fill one basin with ice water and one basin with hot tap water (no greater than 114° F). Soak one towel in each basin. Wring out hot towel and place on the back of the neck for 3 minutes. Remove this towel and replace it with the iced towel for 30 seconds. Repeat the hot and cold applications three times each.

Sinus Headache

Use the same process as for tension headache but place the wrung towels over the sinuses rather than on the back of the neck.

Resources

1. Hochberg, Henry. Neurology Notes. Unpublished.
2. Bastyr University previous handout.