

HEADACHE REMEDIES

NATURAL WAYS TO SPELL RELIEF

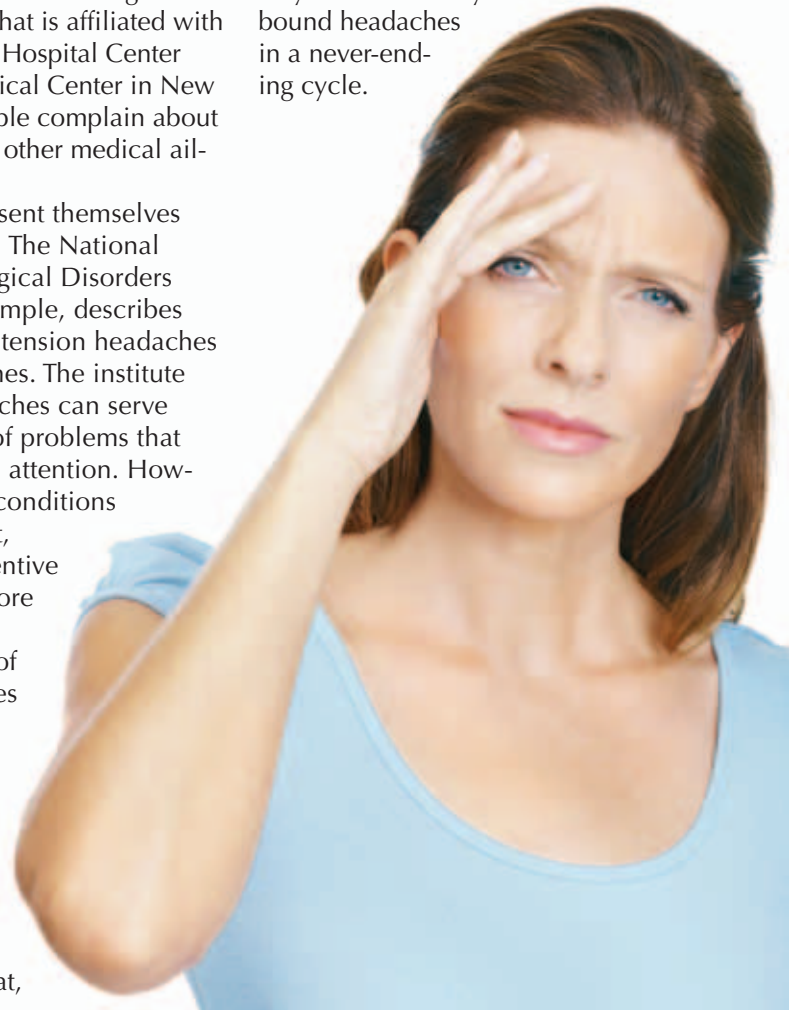
by Dr. Lauri Grossman

Headaches can happen at any time. They can interfere with work, school, family time or the simple enjoyment of a sunny day, but anyone tired of this vexing health problem is far from alone. According to the Headache Institute that is affiliated with St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center and Beth Israel Medical Center in New York City, more people complain about headaches than any other medical ailment.

Headaches present themselves in a variety of ways. The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Strokes, for example, describes vascular migraines, tension headaches and cluster headaches. The institute cautions that headaches can serve as warning signals of problems that require professional attention. However, when serious conditions have been ruled out, conscientious preventive treatment can be more helpful than the all-too-common habit of taking multiple doses of aspirin or other tablets.

Dr. Roger Morrison, of the Hahnemann College of Homeopathy, further reports that there is good clinical evidence that,

for most headaches, taking a single tablet of headache medicine such as aspirin or Tylenol can be just as effective as two or more pills. He also states that such over-the-counter medications may be followed by rebound headaches in a never-ending cycle.



So, where can we get swift relief that also can improve our health in the long run?

Complementary Treatments: University Health Services at the University of California, in Berkeley, recommends acupuncture and manipulative treatments by a qualified chiropractor, osteopath or massage therapist as an alternative. These treatments help to release stress, balance the body's energy and regulate disturbances in the nervous system, which can all be contributing factors to headaches.

Regular Exercise: The National Headache Foundation recommends regular exercise, such as swimming or vigorous walking, preceded by a good warm-up and followed with ample hydration to stave off head pain. A routine of 20 to 40 minutes of aerobic exercise, three or more times a week, helps to both relieve stress and balance internal physiology.

Good Posture: Pay attention to any tendency to bend over a computer or desk for long periods. Baxter Bell, a medical doctor from Northern California, recommends using yoga to help correct alignment that has gotten out of whack due to inattention to proper posture. He says that regular yoga practice often reduces both the frequency and intensity of migraines.

Proper Diet: It's wise to avoid food additives and to eat meals consisting of whole foods. Eating high-fiber foods and drinking a glass of water every two hours lessens the chance of headache caused by a buildup of toxins in the system. It's also generally accepted that eating smaller portions throughout the day instead of large meals helps to keep blood sugar steady.

Food allergies are a known culprit behind chronic headaches. In one study published in the medical journal, *The Lancet*, more than 90 percent of patients reported relief from migraine symptoms after eliminating allergenic substances from their diet. The most common offenders are foods with additives or nitrates, red wine, packaged lunch meats, MSG, hard cheeses, chocolate, citrus fruit, tomatoes, eggplant,

fried foods and foods that are aged, fermented, or marinated with vinegar.

Natural Supplements: Leading natural health specialists James Balch, a physician, and Mark Stengler, a doctor of naturopathy, agree in recommending two supplements to counter headaches.

- Magnesium to lessen migraines and prevent tension headaches, at the rate of 200 milligrams (mg) three times a day. One study of 81 people mentioned in Stengler and Balch's book, *Prescription for Natural Cures*, showed that magnesium alone can reduce the frequency of migraines by as much as 41 percent.
- Riboflavin to prevent migraines, consuming 400 mg every day for at least three months. A second study in their book reported that at this amount, the number of migraine attacks among the 49 participants decreased by 67 percent, with severity reduced by 68 percent.

Applied Homeopathy: Homeopathy can be helpful in treating headaches, especially if individual symptoms are clear (for example, if headaches always occur on the right side at 3 p.m.). Two studies have independently demonstrated homeopathy's beneficial effects in headache relief, published in the *British Homeopathic Journal* and *Journal of Liga Medicorum Homoeopathica Internationalis*; these provide the basis for Homeopathic Educational Services' guidance at *Homeopathic.com*. Individuals may pick the relevant remedy that best matches their symptoms and take a 30C potency (available in most health food stores) dosage four times a day for up to a week. Stop taking the remedy upon improvement, but begin again if symptoms return and consult with a physician.

Lauri Grossman, a doctor of chiropractic and certified classical homeopath, practices homeopathy in Manhattan. She also serves as chair of the American Medical College of Homeopathy's department of humanism, in Phoenix, AZ. Learn more at amcofh.org and HomeopathyCafe.com.