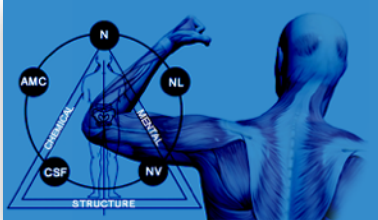


# Pathways To Health



A Healthcare and Selfcare Newsletter From The International College of Applied Kinesiology - USA Chapter

## Editor

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Your doctor of applied kinesiology can answer questions regarding health concerns relating to the current health topics. The applied kinesiology practice goes above and beyond other health care approaches to bring about a superior experience in attaining a greater level of awareness and health. Please share this newsletter with friends and family. \*The information in this newsletter is not intended to diagnose or treat the individual.

Can headaches be solved naturally?

## Headaches: A Complex Health Problem

**Headache**, referring to pain from the head or neck, can be a frustratingly difficult problem to diagnose and treat.

The National Institute of Health (NIH) categorizes primary headaches by those being vascular in nature (migraine, toxic, and cluster headaches) and those that are associated with tension or muscle contraction (tension, chronic muscle contraction, inflammatory, and traction headaches). The NIH estimates that 90% of headaches are of the tension type. Women are significantly more prone to migraine and tension headaches, whereas men are more prone to cluster headaches.

Secondary headaches result from specific illness or dysfunction for which headaches are a symptom. These include trauma (concussion), cardiovascular disease that includes the blood vessels of the head and neck, infections, tumors, and dysfunctions or diseases of thyroid, liver, kidney, eyes, ears, neck, teeth, sinuses, temporomandibular joint, and cranial bones. Headaches can also occur as a side effect of medications and chemical stressors including air pollution, food additives, and both food and environmental allergies.

Most headaches either go untreated or are managed, but not resolved, through medication. This is due to the difficulty in accurately determining the actual cause and the precise therapy needed to resolve their cause.

Diagnosis is the key to resolution. Examining your body functions through

the neuromuscular testing with applied kinesiology methods shines here. Your physician uses applied kinesiology muscle testing to determine function of your nervous system and its relationship to your body structure, body chemistry, and emotional state. This information is used to enhance and integrate the information derived from your history, physical exams, and laboratory findings.

Often a focus on treatment for headaches may be useful in the short-term for managing pain, but does not resolve the underlying cause for headache pain. This focus and approach is ineffective as a long-term solution.

The physician using applied kinesiology (AK) has precision tools to determine the underlying cause of headaches and either treat the problem directly, make an effective referral to the appropriate specialist, or develop the combined care to resolve it. Physicians using AK are very efficient at coordinating various therapies appropriate to the underlying problem and teaching the selfcare required to resolve the emotional stressors, dietary patterns, and environmental factors that may be causing headaches.

The goal of AK focused healthcare is to restore body functions to normal/optimal. The AK-focused physicians model for achieving this is described as the triad of health where body function and cause for dysfunction is categorized as being structural, chemical, or mental/emotional. This model guides the exam and further zeros in on the cause(s) of headaches.



Structural causes for headaches include abnormal mechanics to the structures of the head and neck, including the jaw and teeth, that disrupt normal function of cervical and cranial nerves that can result in neuralgic or myalgic pain. This stress can be to the joints of the neck (cervical spine) or skull (cranial sutures) or to the muscles and connective tissue (tendons, ligaments, or fascia). Often past injuries to the head and neck heal incompletely or improperly. This is a common cause of dysfunction and pain and AK methods are very systematic, logical, and efficient for finding and resolving these lingering and often hidden injuries. Chiropractic, Acupuncture, Osteopathic, and other medical techniques may be employed by the AK focused physician, based on training, licensing, and specialty.

Biochemical and environmental stress is a key factor when considering headaches. Imbalances in body chemistry to consider with headaches are: lactic acidosis (inefficient production of cellular energy), imbalances of pH and electrolytes, chronic dehydration (yes, a common reason for headaches!), liver dysfunctions (liver should always be considered in headaches), and digestive dysfunctions.

Other important considerations are neurotransmitter imbalances, hormonal imbalances (the complexity of female hormone regulation accounts, at least in part, for the increased frequency of headaches in women), food and environmental allergies, food additives, air pollution and other environmental chemicals, and chronic, low grade infections (with sinusitis being very common).

Inflammation is another biochemical stressor that can be a trigger for headaches. There are many pathways for inflammation. Identifying the involved pathway(s) and the best way to correct it/them can be difficult. AK methods are elegantly direct at finding the involved inflammatory pathway and determining the best combination of clinical nutrition (supplements) and diet to control these inflammatory conditions.

Stress is an accepted cause of headaches. AK-focused care has unique tools for identifying and reconditioning emotional stressors and determining optimal selfcare for lowering stress levels. Function of your unconscious, or autonomic nervous system (ANS), is very sensitive to stress, especially if chronic. The ANS controls and regulates your body functions. The ANS is often the overlooked key to solving headaches. Your AK-focused physician is knowledgeable and skilled in examining, diagnosing, and normalizing ANS functions.

Treating headaches as a symptom doesn't resolve the cause and results in ongoing cycles of treatment, medication, and suffering. The answer to this predicament will usually be a combination of care and selfcare and your AK-focused physician is uniquely trained to help you address all of the possible causes.

#### References

Mark Force, DC, DIBAK practices in Scottsdale, Arizona. He lectures, writes, and mentors students at the SW College of Naturopathic Medicine in Tempe, Arizona.

## Research Notes

**Every** year in the US, 50 million people suffer headaches severely enough to interfere with their work. More than 25 billion pills are taken and more than 10 billion dollars are spent for relief. (Smitherman et al., 2013)

ICAK physicians have published an impressive amount of literature on effective, long-lasting treatment of the multiple causes of this condition.

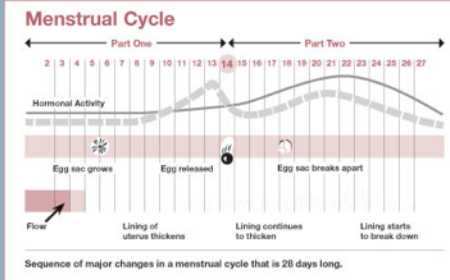
- Cluster (Maykel, 2001)
- Food sensitivities (Hickey, 2007; Ozello, 2002; Hansen, 1998; Lebowitz, 1995)
- Menstrual headaches (Calhoon, 2004)
- Migraine (Hambrick, 2003; Zodykoy, 2002)
- Psoas imbalance (Ozello, 1992)
- TMJ correction (Leaf, 2005; Peet & Clister, 1999; Polino, 1987)
- Whiplash dynamics (Cuthbert & Rosner, 2010 a, b)

The Headache Classification Committee of the International Headache Society suggests the performance of deep neck flexors has greater diagnostic value for musculoskeletal involvement in headache than any other finding.

Scott Cuthbert, DC practices in Pueblo, CO, has recently authored two textbooks on AK and has been published extensively in peer-reviewed



- *Estrogen dominance is a common cause for headaches in women*
- *Diet and stress management help control estrogen levels*
- *Avoid xenoestrogens*



Other Causes of Headaches..

## Menstrual Headaches

**Hormonal** migraines, often referred to as menstrual migraines, are migraine headaches that are triggered by sudden changes and imbalances in a woman's sex hormones during her monthly cycle.

A healthy, yet changing balance of estrogen and progesterone throughout a female's monthly cycle is responsible for sufficient energy, restful sleep, a healthy libido, and overall health and well being – not to mention her ability to conceive. But when the normal estrogen and progesterone levels shift too far from normal, she can experience fatigue, mood swings, hot flashes or sweats, bloating, breast tenderness, and of course headaches – including a migraine.

### What Causes a Menstrual Migraine?

Most often any symptoms a woman feels each month related to her monthly cycle is from what is known as estrogen dominance. This is when she is either making too much estrogen, having trouble properly detoxifying the estrogen, or has insufficient progesterone to balance the estrogen. When these estrogen levels become too high or unopposed by progesterone, a migraine can result.

The most common times during a woman's monthly cycle to present with a migraine is either around ovulation (often around day 8-14 of her cycle), or sometime during the week before her period ("PMS"), if not during this menses.

During ovulation there is a surge in estrogen which is followed by a surge in progesterone. If the surge is unable to be detoxified via the liver, then a migraine can result. Or, if there is not the necessary amount of progesterone which follows the release of the egg, a migraine can occur.

During the end of the cycle when many women present with PMS, migraines can occur as the body is having difficulty breaking down estrogen as well as progesterone to prepare for the beginning of her next cycle.

### What Can You Do To Help Resolve Your Migraine?

There are several things you can do to improve your health to resolve your hormonal-related migraine. First and foremost is to reduce your stress. Stress increases a hormone called cortisol which requires the same nutrients needed to make progesterone. So many women have low progesterone due to too much cortisol (stress). Cortisol also must be broken down in the liver via the same detoxification pathways as all other hormones. So the more cortisol available, the more burdened the liver is and the less efficient it is able to deal with those sex hormones. Reducing stress means finding time to relax and exercise, consuming less if not zero caffeine and sugar, getting adequate sleep, and removing any life burdens as you're able to.

### Supporting Detox Pathways

Xenoestrogens are chemicals that mimic naturally occurring estrogens

and disrupt the function of the endocrine system. Problems with fertility, sexual development, and both male and female hormonal health can be greatly affected by these hormone disruptors. The majority of xenoestrogens are found in plastic products which contain chemicals such as Bisphenol A and other polycarbonates. Using less plastic products and especially never heating or cooking with any plastic product can help lower your xenoestrogen level; this also includes being aware of a plastic lid commonly used on the top of a hot coffee to-go cup.

Many women (men too) do not properly detoxify their hormones due to nutritional deficiencies or problems with their physiology. Sometimes nutrients such as magnesium, vitamin B6, B12, or folate may be necessary to help correct a hormonal imbalance. Using applied kinesiology diagnostic techniques, your doctor can help restore balance to your hormonal system by providing an individualized assessment and treatment plan to help you overcome your migraines and as well as other hormonal-health related problems you may be experiencing.

### References

Stephen Gangemi, DC, DIBAK, practices in Chapel Hill, NC. He treats patients with various conditions ranging from hormonal imbalances to sports injuries.



# Q&A

## You asked... We answer

***What makes a migraine different than a regular headache?***

When compared to tension headaches migraines are generally more severe and last longer. Cluster headaches are even more severe, but only last a short while.

Migraines are thought to be triggered by changes in brain blood vessel size. They may have visual changes associated with them and often are relieved by a dark, quiet environment. Read more about these differences in Dr. Force's article on page 1.

***Can hormone replacement therapy cause headaches?***

In my experience hormone replacement does not typically cause headaches, at least not initially. As hormone levels build up in the body the chances get higher that the liver will become overwhelmed (since it processes hormones) and they will develop.

***What foods can I eat to protect myself from hormonal headaches?***

Cruciferous vegetables kale, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and brussels sprouts are very important. They have a chemical that helps your liver eliminate estrogens from your system. Other foods that support liver detox include beets and artichokes.

Incorporate healthy fats (i.e. fish, avocado, olive and coconut oils) and decrease refined sugars to the best of your ability. This helps keep inflammation in control. Be sure that you are not being triggered by food sensitivities (gluten, dairy, nightshades, etc.) and ask your AK Doctor to check if certain foods are problematic for you.

See Dr. Gangemi's article on page 3 for more detail about hormonal headaches.

***I'm worried about exercising because it has triggered a migraine in the past. Is it ok to work out?***

Yes, please exercise! A gentle warm-up and cool down for about 10 minutes will help redistribute your blood flow gradually. You may need to take it slow at first. Keep in mind that the liver works like a filter for the blood stream and the more you move the better it will be able to detox any of your chemical or hormonal triggers. Ideally you want to be able to do any physical training without concern of headaches. Respect your personal boundaries while attaining your goals.

***Why does everyone say that reducing stress helps? What is the connection?***

Stress increases the chemical cortisol. Excess cortisol is destructive and contributes to hormone imbalance and immune system problems. In order to get you through the current stressful moment it robs the resources needed for recovery. It's not always possible to do less, so think about practicing your ability to relax so it is familiar to you. Yoga, deep breathing, and laughter are a good place to start.

Brought to you by...

Angela Darragh, ND founded the SCNM AK Club. She trains students and teaches an elective in applied kinesiology at Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine in Tempe, AZ.