Benefits of Massage for Migraines

by BRENDA VANTA

Massage for Migraines

Can massage treat migraine headaches? Many people suffering from headaches are turning to alternative treatments such massage therapy, and some feel great improvements. How does massage work for migraine relief?

Massage therapy had been used since ancient times and enjoyed in many cultures -including Egypt, India, China, Japan and Arabic countries. Nowadays is a popular therapy available all over the word. It is usually recommended to relief muscle tension, sleep problems, stress, while improving the mood, energy levels, sleep and mental alertness - and some of these factors can trigger a migraine attack. Massage may also work because helps release serotonin, a substance involved in the development of migraine. In addition, massage may block pain signals that are sent to the brain and can also improve the constriction and dilation of the blood vessels of the head (which are involved in migraine headaches as well).

A few studies confirm the benefits of massage for migraine sufferers. For example, a 2006 study found that the participants who received massage therapy had fewer episodes of migraines and better sleep during the period of time when they had massages. Other studies found massage beneficial for non-migraine (i.e. tension headaches) as well.

Types of Massage Therapy

A variety of techniques are available: sports massage, deep tissue massage, reflexology, Shiatsu, Swedish, cranial-sacral therapy and more. Which type of massage therapy should you choose? Your best option would be to consult a registered massage therapist specialized in treating migraines and headaches, who can suggest the best option for your condition. Massage can be used alone, or in combination with physiotherapy, osteopathy or other alternative treatments.

You Can Try Self-massage

Your massage therapist can teach you how to use self-massage at home, and give you an individualized plan that you could use between your appointments. For example, the following techniques are beneficial to ease headaches and tension:

1. Close your eyes. Place your thumbs on your cheekbones and the fingertips on the temples. Use your fingertips to rub gently the temples (from the corner of the eye to the ear).
2. Close your eyes. Using circular movements and firm pressure, move your fingers slowly and gradually, along the hairline until they met in the middle of the forehead .

Considerations

Massage therapy has an excellent safety profile if is performed by a well trained, licensed therapist. Serious side effects (i.e. nerve damage or internal bleeding) are rare. You may want to check with your doctor if it's ok to have massage if you have heart failure, blood clots, bleeding problems, fever, recent surgery, open sores or contagious skin problems (in these cases massage can be contraindicated). If you are pregnant you should also get the ok from your doctor first.

You have to keep and follow the treatment recommended by your doctor. If massage therapy helps improve your migraines, your doctor may adjust your medication. You should also avoid other other triggers such as perfume, bright lights or certain food or environmental allergens.