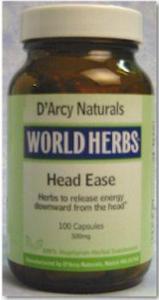


# Tension Headaches

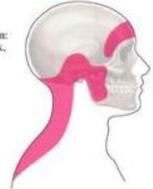
By Geoff D'Arcy, Lic. Ac., D.O.M.

## SUPPLEMENTATION PROGRAM



1. [Head Ease Formula](#): 2 capsules, three times daily.
2. [Stress Support Formula](#): 2 capsules, three times daily.
3. [Chelated Magnesium](#): 1 tablet, or 500 mg. daily.

Possible areas of pain:  
upper back and neck,  
base of head,  
the ears,  
above the ears,  
the jaw,  
above the eyes



The most common class of headaches is termed “tension” or “stress related” headaches and account for 90% of the 40 million headaches that occur to Americans each week. They are caused by muscle tension in the face, neck shoulders and or scalp, which creates disturbances in the blood vessels in the head.

The headache may develop suddenly or progress as the day goes on. It may feel like a steady dull pain at the back of the head or forehead that spreads over the whole head, like a pressure band. It is often relieved by sleep; in fact, if you wake from sleep with a headache then it is not stress or tension related.

We are over-stimulated, over-worked and over-tired. The fast pace of today's world has left us little time for many of life's simple pleasures such as a relaxed meal or even a good night's sleep. Medical research shows 60%-90% of doctor office visits are stress-related and are a direct cause stress/tension headaches. Our bodies are constantly moving towards a state of natural "balance," yet we often don't pay attention to our body's signals and we push past our limits. Over a prolonged period of time, this behavior can create imbalance in the body and may show up as headaches, muscle stiffness, spasms, myofascitis and soreness that often impede the blood flow to the head. Too much stress can create havoc in biochemical and bioelectromagnetic flows in the body. Studies show us what common sense could tell us: stress will make us ill, relaxation can help us. I always recommend to my patients 20 minutes a day of a progressive relaxation technique, alongside taking supplements.

One of the goals of this program is to help you find your own point of balance and to learn to re-balance when stress has disrupted your natural rhythms. The goal of this program is to “own” your own ability to relax. This program encourages you to look at what "balance" means for you, physically, mentally, and emotionally. Maintaining your own balance can particularly help in times of stress, so that tension in your shoulders doesn't manifest as a headache a few hours later. A simple test is included to give you approximate feedback on your stress level.

**Head-Ease Formula:** Studies show that chronic use of symptomatic headache medicines are a major risk in drug-induced “rebound” headaches. Feverfew, however, does not have this effect and has been shown to help headaches with its ingredient, parthenolide, which inhibits the release of migraine-triggering substances (serotonin & histamine), thereby inhibiting the production of inflammatory substances. In a study on feverfew held in Nottingham U.K., the trial followed 59 individuals for 8 months.<sup>9</sup> For 4 months, half received a daily capsule of powdered feverfew leaf; the other half took placebo. The groups were then switched and followed for an additional 4 months. Treatment with feverfew produced a 24% reduction in the number of migraines and a significant decrease in nausea and vomiting during the headaches. A subsequent double-blind study of 57 people with migraines found that use of feverfew leaf could decrease the severity of migraine headaches.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, this trial did not report whether there was any change in the frequency of migraines. However, a



Dutch study involving 50 people showed no difference whatsoever between placebo and a special feverfew extract standardized to parthenolide content. The explanation appears to be that parthenolide is not the active ingredient in feverfew; therefore Head-Ease formula contains the whole herb, not the extract. Because feverfew might slightly inhibit the activity of blood-clotting cells known as platelets, it should not be combined with strong anticoagulants, such as Coumadin (warfarin) or heparin, except on medical advice.<sup>16</sup> Feverfew might also increase the risk of stomach problems if combined with anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin.<sup>17,18,19</sup>

Ginger reduces nausea and vomiting that often accompany migraines. Cnidium, a leading traditional Chinese medicinal herb in the formula, moves blocked blood and energy (Qi). Corydalis is renowned for alleviating pain.

**Stress Support Formula:** This formula eases tension when one is over-stressed. It assists in overcoming the negative effects of stress and supports the body's natural ability to turn off the stress response, thus eliminating the root of stress/tension headaches. Ginseng is an adaptogenic herb: it helps adapt the body adapt to stress by producing a glucoside that the body reads as adrenaline, thereby stopping post-stress-event adrenal exhaustion and calming the mind. The classic Chinese formula, Xiao Yao San, helps to move stagnant liver Qi, which can help the body overcome the negative effects of stress. This formula can help switch off the fight-or-flight response that can wreak havoc on the heart and suppress the immune system, while increasing the body's natural ability to relax.

**Magnesium:** A cofactor in over 300 enzymatic reactions in human physiology. It participates in neuromuscular activity, including excitation-contraction coupling, and energy production through carbohydrate metabolism. Calcium's physiologic role include coupling of excitation-contraction within muscle cells, generation of transmembrane action potentials in cardiac pacemaker and conducting fibers, and transmission of impulses by nerve fibers. It supports bones and is considered to have a cooling calming influence in the body and mind.

**Dietary Guidelines:** Often low blood sugar can provoke a headache; please be sure to eat three meals a day with healthy snacks in between to keep the blood sugar stabilized. Do not eat sugary foods, as these cause blood sugar levels to surge and then crash. The diet should include plenty of organic, unrefined, unprocessed foods, as fresh as possible and in their natural state. Fresh vegetables, fruits, whole grains and unrefined carbohydrates should make up the majority of the diet. Drink plenty of bottled water or diluted juice, at least two liters per day. A minimum of one daily serving of cruciferous vegetables and at least five servings of fresh fruit should be included in the daily diet. Protein sources can be obtained from lentils, soy, beans, nuts, seeds, fish and organic chicken. Eat plenty of greens, grapefruit, lotus root, millet, oranges, pears, pineapple, rice, squash, and watermelon.

**Substances to Avoid:** Red meats, animal fats, sugars and refined foods should be avoided as should caffeine, other stimulants and alcohol. Avoid greasy, hot, spicy, fatty or fried foods as these can cause flaring heat/ wind. (as per TCM) Keep prescription and over-the-counter pharmaceuticals to a minimum, and avoid recreational drugs, chocolate, dairy products, and sugar. Be careful of negative, harmful ways of coping with stress. No smoking. Avoid overeating. Eat as many organic foods as possible.

**Relaxation Technique 20 minutes a day:** Click here to download a [Stress Relief Audio file](#). This is one of the most effective things we can do to protect ourselves from the negative aspects of stress. Learning how to turn off the fight or flight (physiological) response daily is a must. Remember: the human brain is the most potent pharmaceutical factory in the world. Mind-body programs let us tap into this powerful healing resource and help us re-adapt the type A personality. Switching off the physiological effects of stress daily is one of the most important therapies we can do for ourselves. Here is a simple, yet effective relaxation exercise:



1. Sit in a comfortable position.
2. Breathe deeply and evenly.
3. Every time you breathe out, let your body release tension.
4. Let thoughts flow through.
5. Let yourself drift.
6. Imagine relaxing thoughts or images (e.g. "warm and heavy", "calm and peaceful", "it's o.k.", "being on the woods or at the beach").
7. End with a deep breath and stretch.

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\*The statements contained in this article have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

