

ACUPUNCTURE FOR HEADACHES



Boston
Children's
Hospital

Pain Treatment
Center

Until every child is well

WHAT IS ACUPUNCTURE?

Acupuncture is a traditional Chinese medicine technique that has been practiced for more than 3,000 years. It involves the insertion and manipulation of very small hair-thin needles into distinct points on the body to balance a patient's qi, or energy force. Extensive advanced research has been conducted on acupuncture over the past several decades. Acupuncture is extremely safe and kids generally tolerate the treatment well. For younger children, we commonly provide acupressure or other related techniques instead.

The LI-4 acupuncture point is called "He Gu" in Chinese. It is located on the back of the hand, between the first and second metacarpal bones. Applying pressure to LI-4 is believed to help ease headache pain. You can try this yourself: Press the thumb of one hand against the base of the index finger on your other hand. LI-4 is at the highest point of the bulge of muscle on the back of that hand.

IS ACUPUNCTURE EFFECTIVE FOR HEADACHES?

Numerous clinical studies of adult headache patients indicate that acupuncture is indeed helpful. For example, a review of 22 trials including 4,985 participants with episodic migraines suggested that adding acupuncture to treatment of migraine attacks can reduce the frequency of these headaches. This study found that acupuncture may be at least as effective a treatment as preventive medications and concluded that acupuncture should be considered a treatment option for patients with migraine headaches.

Likewise, a systematic review of randomized controlled clinical trials involving 12 studies with 2,349 participants compared acupuncture to other preventive treatments, as well as to routine care, and found acupuncture to be effective for treating frequent episodic or chronic tension-type headaches. The National Institutes of Health has issued a consensus statement on acupuncture declaring that there are reasonable data and promising evidence to support its use for reducing headaches.

In the Medical Acupuncture Service, we often treat pediatric patients with chronic headaches and have had positive results. Both Drs. Lin and Tung are pediatric anesthesiologists and experienced pediatric acupuncture providers. We would be happy to discuss how acupuncture or related techniques might ease your child's headaches.

ABOUT US

The Medical Acupuncture Service is part of the Department of Anesthesiology, Critical Care and Pain Medicine at Boston Children's Hospital. Led by Yuan-Chi Lin, MD, MPH, and Cynthia Tung, MD, MPH, our doctors are fully licensed in Western medicine and also have thorough training in acupuncture as a specialty practice. The service provides care for children and young adults to help them manage a variety of acute and chronic pain as well as non-pain-related illnesses through acupuncture. We offer services through our inpatient facility at the Boston Children's Longwood Campus and our outpatient Medical Acupuncture Clinic at Boston Children's Waltham location. The majority of patients come weekly for 4 to 6 weeks.

For inpatient appointments:

Boston Children's Hospital
300 Longwood Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
617-355-4158

For outpatient appointments:

Boston Children's at Waltham
9 Hope Avenue
Waltham, MA 02453
781-216-3700