

From the publisher: “. . . Detailed in full-color photos are the asanas, breathwork, mudras, visualizations, and mantras which connect to each chakra. These color photographs throughout the book make the yoga positions easy to follow and understand. Healing Yoga also includes a section on yoga for specific ailments, including migraines, high blood pressure, and depression.”


Burling, Joy E, based on advice from Dr. Frank Chandra. Epilepsy, migraine, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis: Definitions, simple precautions and exercises. 1975. IAYT holds a copy of this one-page set of notes.

For migraine: “Try over-breathing exercises (theoretically helpful) but avoid pranayama exercises which causes retention of CO2. Some have found the shoulder stand, if regularly done, say, for three months, has helped. Others claim that relaxation exercises also help.”


“The Yoga of Healing, an anthology of articles published in *The Hindu* examines eight systems of healing—allopathy, Ayurveda, homeopathy, acupuncture, pranic healing, Reiki, Yoga, and psychoanalysis—their approach to sickness, their intrinsic healing power, and their limitations. Yoga expert T. K. V. Desikachar and allopathic surgeon Dr. Arjun Rajgopalan anchor a series of dialogues with specialists in the various fields. What emerges is the need for a synthesis—a mixing and merging of the positive aspects of all the systems, a need to discover a cohesive path towards holistic healing.” The second part of the book focuses on four common chronic conditions (asthma, backache, headache and high blood pressure), and panels of practitioners from the various disciplines outline how they would begin to treat these problems.

**Easy yoga for headache relief.** Article available online: http://www.goldentemple.com/ Clients/KIIT/GT/Yoga.nsf/AllKriyas.


Abstract: Yoga and hypnosis energize traditional Western psychotherapy by promoting a state of consciousness that opens up both inner exploration and self-directed change. “Insight” meets with new courses of action, once the body system and its subtle energy channels are realigned. A case study of a woman suffering from chronic headaches shows the effectiveness of these methods for attaining pain relief while embarking on a path of personal growth.

Gilmore, Ruth. Answers the questions, “Why is headstand recommended to banish headaches?” (Gilmore answers that it is not recommended) and “Can we feel blood vessel expansion or contraction in the brain as headaches?” *Yoga and Health*, Jul 1998, p. 31.


Reports on Dr. Ramesh Manocha’s meditation research. “Our study [at Royal Hospital for Women] showed meditation was effective in dealing with moderate to severe migraine . . . In some cases, patients experienced complete elimination of their migraines . . .” One participant states, “I wasn’t expecting it to work; I was a bit skeptical at first . . . After a month of meditation for five minutes morning and night, I noticed the difference. I had fewer migraines and their intensity decreased. When I stopped meditating, they started to come back.”


Belleruth Naparstek, in the April 5, 2001, issue of *ImageryNews*, writes: This “pilot study of 20 kids suffering from migraines . . ., at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, . . . shows terrific results when 11-12 year old kids are taught deep breathing, muscle relaxation and guided imagery.

“The kids were encouraged to practice at home at least 3 times a week and at the onset of a headache. The severity, frequency and duration of their headaches were found to decrease significantly. Severity went from an average of a 5 on a 10-point scale, to 4.5; frequency dropped from 12.9 days a month to 10 days a month; and duration went from an average of 6.9 hours down to 5.2.

“Peripheral body temperature (PBT) rose an average of 3.3 degrees after the first training session, and 3.7 after the second. (As the body becomes more relaxed, body temperature at the periphery rises.)

“These are very encouraging findings. In fact, 85% of the kids were reported by their parents to be functioning better by the end of their 2nd training session.”


“We asked how we could support your teaching, and you requested sequences you could use in the studio. So here’s a primer on sequencing a class, followed by nine routines that target different types of students, areas of the body, and physical conditions.”

Sequences include: 45-minute beginners, advanced beginners, headache, menstruation, depression, groins, shoulders, forward bends, backbends.


Serber, Ellen. Therapeutic sequences for backache and headache. *International Association of Yoga Therapists Newsletter*, Spring 1997, pp. 1-4. [Please also add to the Yoga and the Back bibliography.]


Statistics. It is estimated that about 50 million Americans suffer from headaches (Bixby Knolls Health Online Magazine, 14 May 2002).


Abstract: In the West, the use of the methods of alternative medicine, including meditation, has been on the rise. In the US, Kabat-Zinn and associates have pioneered the extensive use of mindfulness meditation (MM) for the treatment of people facing pain and illness. Among the essentials of MM is the observation of bodily sensations, including pain. In Taiwan, despite the deep cultural roots of meditation, its therapeutic use has received little attention from institutionalized medicine. We report on the case of a man who was prone to developing severe headaches due to activities requiring extreme concentration. He learned to control his pain and discomfort through mindfulness meditation, although this practice in fact induced headaches initially. It is suggested that training in MM may be a medically superior and cost-effective alternative to pain medication for the control of headaches with no underlying organic causes in highly motivated patients.


Includes Breathing exercises, Suksma Vyayama (strengthening exercises), Yogasanas, Pranayama, Meditation (Dharana, Dhyana), and Kriyas


Yee, Rodney. Yoga Journal’s Yoga Remedies for Natural Healing. Available from Yoga Journal, 1-800-IDOYOGA. (Includes headaches.)


___________. Headache classes. URL: http://freespace.virgin.net/yogabio.med/ (click on “Yoga Therapy & How to Try It,” then click on “Headaches,” then click on “Asthma”).

Of Related Interest


Goyeche, J. R. M. Somatopsychic methods of pain relief: Case studies. Paper presented at meeting of Canadian Pain Society, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1983. (Includes headache and migraine.)


“Specially programmed for sufferers of chronic neck soreness, frequent tension headaches, and TMJ problems.”


Removing the muscle between the eyebrows, a procedure done in plastic surgery to smooth the forehead, has brought a side benefit of permanent, unexpected relief to many severe migraine sufferers. Research is now underway at Case Western University on 200 subjects, who will undergo the surgery. To be eligible to participate, patients must have moderate to serious migraines that do not respond well to medication.


Abstract: Susceptibility to migraine is determined by genetic factors and is therefore subject to the forces of natural selection. Migraine is a common and ancient disorder whose prevalence may be increasing, suggesting that a migraine-prone nervous system may be associated with reproductive or survival advantages. Five evolutionary explanations are reviewed that might account for the persistence of migraine: (i) migraine as a defence mechanism; (ii) migraine as a result of conflict with other organisms; (iii) migraine as result of novel environmental factors; (iv) migraine as a trade-off between genetic harms and benefits; and (v) migraine as a design constraint. An evolutionary perspective on migraine allows the generation of important hypotheses about the disorder and suggests rewarding possibilities for further research.


Based on a summary by Belleruth Naparstek, ImageryNews (www.healthjourneys.com), 19 Jan 2003: This meta-analysis of the research literature on behavioral interventions for headache (primarily relaxation, biofeedback, and stress-management) shows clinically significant effectiveness in reducing recurrent migraine and tension-type headaches (35-50% reduction). The evidence also suggests that the level of improvement with behavioral interventions may rival those obtained with widely used pharmacological therapies. In addition, the review “mentions that in recent years some attempts have been made to increase the availability and cost-effectiveness of behavioral interventions through alternative delivery formats and mass communications, and suggests that further
integration of behavioral treatments be instituted in primary care settings, the place where the great majority of headache sufferers receive treatment.”


From a review by Belleruth Naparstek in *HealthJourneys News*, 16 May 2001:

“A study published by Scott W. Powers, Ph.D., of the Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center in a recent issue of Neurology shows that relaxation training, biofeedback and guided imagery are highly promising treatments for children suffering from migraine headaches.

“The 20 children in the study, with an average age of 11.5 years, were taught deep breathing, muscle relaxation and guided imagery techniques, and were encouraged to practice them at home at least three times a week and at the onset of a headache.

“Headache severity in the children decreased from 5 on a 10 point scale prior to initial training to 4.5 at the time of the next visit, about five months later. The average frequency and duration of headaches also decreased from 12.9 days to just under 10 days a month, and in duration from 6.9 hours to 5.2 hours. 85% of the parents of the children in the study reported that their children were functioning better by the end of the second therapy session.

“Researchers also monitored the children’s peripheral body temperature (PBT) using a computer-based biofeedback system. The PBT rose 3.3 degrees Fahrenheit on average following the first relaxation training and 3.7 degrees Fahrenheit following the second. As the body becomes more relaxed, body temperature rises.”


**Ongoing Research**

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Dr. Manocha is Barry Wren Fellow at the Royal Hospital for Women, where he initiated the Meditation Research Program in the hospital’s Natural Therapies Unit. Using the Sahaja Yoga meditation technique, the research has shown promising results for the treatment of asthma, headache, menopause, and depression.