

Complementary and Integrative Approaches for Pediatric Headache

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In this article, the use of complementary and integrative medicine for the management of pediatric headache is reviewed. Despite limited numbers of studies for pediatric headaches, children and families seek these services. Integrative medicine focuses on treating the whole person, integrating conventional medicine with mind-body-spirit methods. Nutraceuticals include dietary supplements in the form of vitamins (vitamin D), minerals (magnesium), coenzyme Q, butterbur, and melatonin. Acupuncture, stimulation, physical therapy and Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulations (TENS) or Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) may also be useful in selected patients. The efficacy of all these therapeutic alternatives in pediatric headache is presented here. Primary care providers, neurologists, and headache specialists alike need to be informed of such interventions and integrate these approaches, when appropriate, in the management of children with headaches.

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Introduction

Complementary alternative medicine (CAM) use is common in the US population and in children with neurological disease.¹⁻³ Although CAM use is widespread, research in this field and evidence-based recommendations are trailing behind. This leaves medical providers uneasy in counseling patients and their families on CAM-related treatments. Similarly, patients and the families are uneasy in disclosing CAM use to their medical providers, despite wanting advice on complementary therapies.⁴⁻⁶

The objective of this review is to paint the landscape of CAM for the management of pediatric headache using an integrative approach. This is in line with the recent name change of the NIH National Center for CAM (NCCAM) to National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH). This provides attention and focus on the “integrative” rather than “alternative” approaches. Several recent publications review the scant evidence for complementary therapies for pediatric and adult headache.⁷⁻¹⁰ This article is aimed to expand on these reviews and empower medical providers with background information and knowledge

around complementary and integrative approaches for pediatric headache populations.

An Integrative Approach

Integrative medicine focuses on treating the whole person, integrating conventional medicine with mind-body-spirit methods. An integrative approach for pediatric headache can be categorized using a mind-body-spirit framework as well. Providing a comprehensive integrative approach is frequently lost in day-to-day medical practice given the focus on conventional approaches with “sound” medical evidence, limits in time, and lack of knowledge in integrative methods. However tools and knowledge for providers can ease the time constraints and improve confidence in educating and counseling patients and families in the management of their headaches.

A patient intake questionnaire provides a deeper understanding of the patient's lifestyle, behaviors and previous use of CAM (Table 1) and efficiency during a clinic visit. This intake questionnaire offers structure and guidance to where the practitioner can focus their efforts and time. Headache management must be tailored to individual subjects, drawing on their strengths and improving their habits and behaviors. It is crucial to turn the attention on to the child and not their disease, gaining trust, and having the child accept their role as an active participant in the prevention and treatment of their headaches. Each clinic appointment

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Table 1 Case—13-Year-Old Obese Female With High-Frequency Migraines Completes the Following Intake Questions as Part of a Headache Intake Questionnaire

Treatments Tried	Helping?	How Long Did You Take It, mo?
Multivitamin or multimineral		
Vitamin D		
Iron		
Riboflavin (vitamin B2)		
Magnesium	No	2 mo—stopped because stomach issues
Coenzyme Q10		
Feverfew		
Petasites (butterbur)	Do not know	6 mo
Psychologist, therapist	No	Just started, been only once
Physical therapy		
Massage therapy		
Chiropractic therapy		
Acupressure or puncture		
Biofeedback		
Yoga		
Other		
Core Health Questions		
Exercise		
How often do you exercise? <u>1-2</u> d per week.		
What do you do for exercise? <u>walk</u> How long do you typically exercise? <u>20</u> min.		
Relaxation		
How do you relax? <u>sleep, watch TV</u> Do you wish you had more time to relax? <u>x</u> Yes <u> </u> No.		
Sleep		
On school nights, how long does it take you to fall asleep? <u>60-75</u> min.		
How many hours do you sleep a night? <u>6</u> h.		
Do you have any problems falling asleep? <u>x</u> Yes <u> </u> No.		
Do you have any problems staying asleep? <u>x</u> Yes <u> </u> No.		
Do you snore? <u>x</u> Yes <u> </u> No.		
Do you grind your teeth? <u> </u> Yes <u>x</u> No.		
Diet		
How is your appetite? <u> </u> excellent <u> </u> good <u>x</u> okay <u> </u> not good <u> </u> awful.		
Do you skip meals often? <u>x</u> Yes <u> </u> No.		
How many 8-oz glass of water, juice, or milk do you drink per day? <u>4</u> glasses/d.		
Do you drink caffeinated beverages (soda, coffee, or tea)? <u>x</u> Yes <u> </u> No; if yes, how much? <u>2</u> servings/wk.		
Electronic use		
How many hours per day do you watch TV and play video games? <u>2</u> h.		
How many hours per day do you use the computer? <u>4</u> h.		
How much of the computer use is for school work? <u>2.5</u> h.		
How many hours per day do you text, talk, or play on the phone? <u>all day</u> h.		

should be viewed as an opportunity to provide the family with education and practical tools that can be employed immediately. Many headache patients may also benefit from referrals to providers who can offer services such as massage, psychotherapy, and physical therapy.¹¹ However, access to these services can be difficult for families because of time constraints, affordability, lack of providers in their community, and distance from services. Gathering a thorough history with the assistance of an intake questionnaire can guide counseling on integrative approaches pertinent to the child and improve efficiency during the patient visit.

Mind

Approaches centered on the mental aspect of a person have 3 primary goals: stress management, pain coping, and

behavioral change. A focused review of the behavioral approaches including cognitive behavioral therapy in pediatric migraine has recently been published by Kroner et al¹² Here we focus on concepts of mindfulness, promoting self-awareness, as well as biofeedback and neurofeedback.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is being present at the moment with openness and nonjudgement; it is a state of full awareness that does not exclude anything. This can sometimes be confused with heightened concentration, which limits your perception of something to a single focal point. Being mindful, is being present with a consciousness of both internal and external milieus, including emotions, thoughts, and sensations.

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