



MARMA CHIKITSA AND HEADACHES: UNDERSTANDING AYURVEDIC TECHNIQUES FOR PAIN RELIEF

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<https://doi.org/10.46607/iamj1112112024>

(Published Online: November 2024)

Open Access

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Article Received: 05/10/2024 - Peer Reviewed: 30/10/2024 - Accepted for Publication: 14/11/2024.



ABSTRACT

In Ayurveda, headaches, referred to as Shirah Shula in Sanskrit, are linked to imbalances in the doshas, aiding in the identification of their underlying causes, which may stem from nervous tissues or bone structures. The human body contains 107 Marma points, 37 in the head and neck region, suggesting that Marma Chikitsa can be a valuable approach for headache treatment. This review aims to enhance understanding of the role of Marma Chikitsa in managing various types of headaches in patients. It explores specific Marma points associated with different headache types and demonstrates how stimulation of these points can alleviate pain. Headaches can arise not only from imbalances in Vata, Pitta, and Kapha doshas but also from their various combinations. Effective treatment begins with identifying the headache type and relevant Marma points. Among the multiple therapies, Shirodhara is highlighted for its safety and efficacy, providing a calming and anxiolytic effect. Additionally, stimulating the pain-related Marma points significantly enhances healing and reduces discomfort. In conclusion, Marma Chikitsa promotes a harmonious balance of energies among the body, mind, and soul, facilitating effective pain relief.

Keywords: *Marma chikitsa, Dosha, Shirodhara, Pain, Ayurveda*

INTRODUCTION

Pain is an unpleasant sensation or experience resulting from actual or potential tissue damage. While temporary pain might be easy to overlook, persistent, recurring, or intense pain should prompt medical consultation, as it could point to an underlying health issue. The cause of the pain determines the appropriate treatment. Headaches, one of the most common types of pain, affect nearly everyone at some point. Their intensity can range from mild to severe. Severe headaches are often characterised by throbbing pain and symptoms such as vomiting and scalp tenderness¹. In contrast, mild headaches manifest as a non-descriptive, tight band-like discomfort that usually affects the entire head, commonly seen in tension-type headaches.

One of the Ayurvedic treatments for headaches is Marma chikitsa. This method enhances or revitalises physical, mental, and spiritual energies². Marma science is a timeless, natural, and non-invasive healing practice that endures because it preserves core moral values among its practitioners. It fosters a sense of calm, self-discipline, self-healing, awareness, and happiness, helping to prevent pain and sorrow³.

Marma: Marmas are vital points in the body where muscles (mamsa), blood vessels (sira), ligaments and tendons (snayu), bones (asthi), and joints (sandhi) converge. These points are believed to encompass critical elements such as Soma, Maruta, Teja, Raja, Satwa, Tama, and Bhutatma⁴.

Marma Chikitsa: Marma Therapy is an ancient Indian healing practice focused on manipulating the body's subtle energy, known as Prana, to support the healing process. It involves working with 107 specific points in the body, believed to serve as gateways to the body, mind, and consciousness⁵.

I. AIM & OBJECTIVE

The main goal is to create a treatment plan for effectively managing headaches using Marma Chikitsa's Ayurvedic approach.

II. Treatment of Common Types of Headaches Using Marma Chikitsa

The treatment begins by identifying the doshic nature of the headache, which may primarily involve one or

a combination of the three doshas: Pitta, Kapha, or Vata. Once the dosha is determined, the appropriate Marma points are selected based on the location of the pain.

1. **Primary Headaches:** These headaches occur independently, without being linked to any underlying condition. Examples include:

Migraine (Ardhavabhedaka): The development of Ardhavabhedaka involves an imbalance of all three doshas, with Vata or VataKapha being predominant. While not life-threatening, improper treatment can lead to complications affecting eyesight or hearing⁶. The treatment focuses on specific Marma points like Vidhura, Apanga, Avarta, Sthapani, Simanta, Shringataka, and Adhipathi. Stimulating these points helps relieve headaches and improve the patient's overall well-being. Additionally, this therapy aids in balancing the Vata dosha, which is crucial for maintaining harmony with the other two doshas, thereby alleviating the condition more effectively⁷.

Tension-Type Headache (Vataja Shiroroga): Mental factors such as worry (Chinta), grief (Shoka), and fear (Bhaya) contribute to Jatharagni mandya, which subsequently leads to the formation of Apakva amarasa. This results in increased malarupi kapha, which travels to Rasa-Rakta Samvahana and reaches the head (Shiras). The resulting blockage, caused by Khavaigunya, further disrupts the Manovaha srotas and increases Raja and Tamo gunas. Consequently, this aggravates Vata dosha, resulting in Vataja Shirashula⁸.

2. **Secondary Headaches:** Secondary headaches are symptoms of other disorders that cause pain. Examples include headaches resulting from bacterial meningitis, trauma, and medication overuse.

Neuropathies and Facial Pains: These types of pain can occur due to lesions or diseases affecting the nervous system. Pain that follows the distribution of a nerve is typically characterised as neuralgia.

Marma Points: The locations of headaches due to secondary causes and neuropathy can vary among patients. The most common Marma points involved in treatment are described below:

- a. **Shankha Marma:** Situated at the temples, just behind the eyebrows, the left and right Shankha points correspond to the duodenum and descending colon, as well as the stomach and ascending colon, respectively. Massaging this with Brahmi, Jatamansi, or Chandan oil can help relieve headaches, calm Pittadosha, reduce stress and alleviate pain.
- b. **Avarta Marma:** This point is located just above each eyebrow and at the centre of the eyebrows. Due to its sensitivity, this marma should be stimulated by a trained practitioner. It can help relieve eye strain and tension, reduce headaches, calm Vata dosha, and enhance the flow of Prana.
- c. **Sthapani Marma:** Found at the centre of the forehead, one angula above the nasal root, this marma is naturally activated during Yogasana when the forehead touches the ground. Stimulating this point can help reduce headaches, improve hormonal balance, relieve sinus issues and nasal obstructions, and decrease eye strain.

Stimulation of these marma points can be accomplished using various techniques, such as Abhyanga (massage), Mardana (acupressure), aromatherapy, Pranic healing, herbal paste application (lepa), Raktamokshana (bloodletting), and Agni karma. By channeling the Prana (vital energy) present at the marma points, blockages can be cleared (even in areas not directly linked), and the flow of energy can be enhanced, leading to improved health of the body, mind, and spirit⁹.

DISCUSSION

Marma therapy can be divided into two categories: pharmacological (with medicine) and non-pharmacological (without medicine). Depending on the type and severity of the headache, one of these approaches should be selected and implemented. This article focuses solely on the study of non-pharmacological therapy. Future research could ex-

plore the combination of marma therapy with pharmacological treatments and examine the outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This review paper demonstrates which marma points are involved in various types of headaches and how stimulating these points can provide relief from pain. Headaches arise not only from imbalances in Vata, Pitta, or Kapha doshas but also from their combinations. Treatment begins with identifying the specific type of headache and the associated marma points. One of the safest and most effective treatments is Shirodhara therapy, which has a calming and anxiolytic effect. Additionally, stimulating the marma points related to the pain significantly enhances the healing process and reduces discomfort. In conclusion, Marma chikitsa promotes a balance of energies within the body, mind, and spirit, facilitating pain relief.

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Source of Support: Nil

Conflict of Interest: None Declared

How to cite this URL: Vedanti Kothekar & Alka Charde: Marma chikitsa and headaches: understanding ayurvedic techniques for pain relief. International Ayurvedic Medical Journal {online} 2024 {cited November 2024} Available from:

http://www.iamj.in/posts/images/upload/1998_2000.pdf