

Review Article

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## Headache in Children: Update on Complementary Treatments

Stefanie Schetzek, Florian Heinen, Sigrid Kruse, Ingo Borggraefe, Michaela Bonfert, Chady Saul, Sven Gottschling, Friedrich Ebinger

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Abstract

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### Abstract

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is widely used by both patients with primary headache syndromes. Despite a considerable number of articles addressing evidence for CAM is still poor. The aim of this review was to give an overview of the current evidence of alternative therapies used in the treatment of primary headache syndromes. MEDLINE and Cochrane Library were systematically searched for articles dealing with complementary and alternative treatment or prophylaxis of headache published within the past 20 years.

### Keywords

children - headache - complementary and alternative medicine

### We recommend

Headache in Children: Update on Complementary Treatments

Stefanie Schetzek et al., *Neuropediatrics*, 2013

Acupuncture in Adult and Pediatric Headache: A Narrative Review

Elizabeth Doll et al., *Neuropediatrics*, 2019

Complementary and Alternative Approaches to Treating Communication Disorders

Kristine Lundgren, *Seminars in Speech and Language*, 2004

Alternative Therapies for Seizures: Promises and Dangers

Joseph I. Sirven, *Seminars in Neurology*, 2007

Identifying Complementary and Alternative Medicine Usage Information from Internet Resources

Vivekanand Sharma et al., *Methods of Information in Medicine*, 2016

## Headache in Children: Update on Complementary Treatments

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Neuropediatrics 2013;44:25-33.

### Abstract

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is widely used by both patients with primary headache syndromes. Despite a considerable number of articles addressing evidence for CAM is still poor. The aim of this review was to give an overview of the current evidence of alternative therapies used in the treatment of primary headache syndromes. MEDLINE and Cochrane Library were systematically searched for articles dealing with complementary and alternative treatment or prophylaxis of headache published within the past 20 years.

### Keywords

- ▶ children
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### Introduction

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is increasingly popular in the treatment of headache in children. Several studies, performed in various countries, have shown a prevalence of the use of CAM among children with acute conditions of 12 to 23%<sup>1,2</sup> and for children with chronic illnesses, 44 to 54%.<sup>3</sup> Two German studies showed some use of CAM in 81.7% of the patients attending tertiary outpatient clinics<sup>4</sup> and that 75.7% of the 115 observed children in a pediatric day center received CAM from their parents.<sup>5</sup> Most children in the day center (58.4%) received a combination of CAM and so-called conventional medicine, whereas 15.6% used CAM alone and 26.0% used only conventional prescribed medications. The physician was informed about the CAM treatment only in half of the cases.<sup>5</sup> Despite the growing number of publications on CAM, there is no generally accepted definition of CAM.<sup>6</sup> The U.S. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine defines CAM as "a

group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not currently considered conventional medicine."<sup>7</sup>

The overall use of CAM therapies increased in the general population from 33.8 to 42.1% in the interval 1997 and in Germany from 52% in 1970 to 65% in 1997. In general, pharmacologic prophylaxis of chronic headache in children is only indicated, if lifestyle modifications and non-pharmacologic prophylaxis are not effective.<sup>1</sup> CAM is predominantly motivated by the wish "to do nothing undone," "to be active against the disease," "to avoid side effects."<sup>4</sup> In both children and adults, the number of headache days, longer duration of headache, and higher personal costs, and use of CAM in primary headache syndromes increases with increasing age.<sup>8</sup> Studies addressing more established treatments, higher personal costs, and use of CAM in children deal with pharmacologic prophylaxis to terminate acute headache attacks and the

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