Acu News

Aged ginger is more pungent. – Chinese Proverb

Which Migraine are You?

Migraines affect about 10% of people worldwide. Anyone who suffers from migraines can tell you, as far as headaches go, migraines are in a class of their own. In general, migraines tend to be one-sided with severe pain, but what differentiates a migraine from other headaches are the accompanying symptoms that can include visual disturbances, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, even temporary paralysis. Western medicine subdivides and categorizes migraines based on symptomatology.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has its own subdivisions for migraines based on etiology and symptomatology. If you are someone that suffers from migraines, can you relate to any of these categories?

EXTERNAL WIND: In Chinese Medicine, external wind refers to forces of energy affecting us from the outside of the body and are often related to the invasion of bacteria and viruses when our immune system gets overwhelmed. If you have suffered from migraines triggered by the onset of a cold or flu, then you have experienced a migraine brought on by external wind. Accompanying symptoms can include a stiff neck, body aches, chills, fever, sore throat, congestion, and mild dizziness.

LIVER EXCESS: This is a big category, as liver pathology expresses itself in various ways. The liver in Chinese medicine is a very important organ for its role in keeping qi (energy) flowing smoothly. Blood follows qi, so while blood stagnation is in another category of its own, one of the root imbalances that can lead to that are issues with liver function.

Women are 3 times more likely to experience migraines which is thought to be due to hormone fluctuations. The liver also regulates menstruation, according to TCM, so migraines related to cyclical hormone changes will generally fall under this category too. Migraines related to Liver qi stagnation may come with an expanding/distending feeling and will often be triggered by stress and/or hormonal changes. There is sometimes heat accumulation in the liver as well. Liver fire-type migraines can be identified by red, burning eyes, and occasionally labored breathing.

When the excess liver energy rises in the body we call it: Liver yang up and you may be dealing with this if you experience dizziness, a bitter taste in the mouth, and find yourself short-tempered with a flushed face. If you have high blood pressure and/or ear ringing that goes along with your migraine, you may fall into this category as well. Since excess liver energy will often 'attack' the digestion, Liver excess-type migraines may also include symptoms like gas, belching and acid reflux.

QI & BLOOD DEFICIENCY: There are many reasons the body can be in a deficient state. Genetic, environmental and lifestyle reasons abound. Simply put though, if your migraines come along with extreme fatigue and exhaustion and possibly a pale complexion, you could fall into this category.

BLOOD STAGNATION: When we think of blood stagnation in Chinese Medicine, the main symptom we think of is pain. These tend to be the most severe migraines. Pain is sharp, in a fixed location, persistent and steady. There may be associated memory loss and palpitations. These are also common with a history of head injury.

COLD, DAMP OR PHLEGM: Some digestive symptoms were mentioned in relation to liver pathology, but someone who presents with an excess of damp or phlegm may have more extreme digestive issues such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. These may be relieved by warmth if the body is also retaining cold energy. Also, while wind-type and 'liver yang up' migraines may be accompanied by some dizziness, with a phlegm buildup in the body it would be more pronounced, along with heavier sensations in the head.

No matter what type of migraine you deal with, acupuncture can help! Get in for a series of treatments that will rebalance these patterns & help keep you migraine-free. Call us!

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[1] *https://www.medscape.com/answers/1142556-170220/what-is-the-global-prevalence-of-migraine-headache*

[2] *https://migrainebuddy.com/understanding-migraines-the-gender-divide/*