



## TENSION HEADACHE DURING THE PANDEMIC PERIOD AN AYURVEDIC OVERVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

World is going through a period of pandemic and has been hit by economic recession, thus leading to people losing their jobs and the way of their livelihood has come to a halt. Leading to mental frustration in turn leading to a growth in tension headache cases. Thus, headache or cephalgia is the symptom of pain anywhere in the region of head, neck or scalp. Among the different types of headache, tension type of headache is most commonly seen neglected and difficult to treat. The modern treatment is restricted towards symptomatic relief and no permanent cure. It is characterized by pain, which is typically pressing or tightening in quality, mild to moderate in intensity and bilateral in nature, which can be correlated with *Vataja Shirashoola*. This paper investigates how pandemic has affected the tension headache and how can we prevent and manage it by Ayurveda.

**Keywords:** Tension headache, *Vataja Shirashoola*, pandemic

## INTRODUCTION

Tension Types of Headaches (TTH) are recurrent episodes of headache which last minutes to weeks. It is the

most common type of primary headache. The age-standardized 1-year prevalence of TTH was 35.1%,

higher among younger people<sup>1</sup>. During this pandemic of COVID-19 there is an increase in the number of stress headache or tension headache, for which one of the reasons is not being sure of what is coming, which can trigger headaches, anxiety and stress. Tension type of headache (ICD code-G44 209) is one of the common reasons for visits to primary care physicians and medical care providers. According to WHO, 70% of population suffer from tension headache, main symptoms are pain radiating from the lower back of the head, neck, eyes or other muscles groups in the body typically affecting both sides of the head. The pain is usually described as dull, pressure like, constricting or given a sense of fullness in the head. Patients describe it as like wearing a tight hat or a tight band around the head. Physical activity has no influence on headache intensity. No symptoms such as vomiting or nausea but may be present with photophobia and phonophobia. Mostly it is reported to start at some time during day and to increase slowly, although some people may have an aggravation by late evening<sup>2</sup>. The aggravating factors of TTH are stress, lack of sleep and not eating on time, these factors are mainly related to once lifestyle<sup>3</sup>. During the pandemic and as a part of lockdown most people are working from home and many people are losing their jobs, thus people are suffering from everyday anxiety and increased stress levels and there is a drastic change in their routine of day to day life, like irregular sleep, change in the time and quantity of food, change in the surroundings which they are not usually exposed, over work stress, increased intake of caffeine and alcohol which all are triggering factors for tension headache<sup>4</sup>. These factors are not given importance and are not looked into. Ayurveda is a science which has given importance to *dinacharya* or lifestyle which helps in maintenance of *manasika arogya* which in turn helps in physical health. The symptoms of Tension type of headache can be correlated with *Vataja shirashoola*. In Ayurveda classics *shirashoola* is having primary importance among other *shirorogas*. *Manasika nidana* like *bhaya*, *trasa*, *shoka* aggravates the *Vataja shirashoola* <sup>5</sup>as considering the *bhoomidesha* for the *vyadhi* a young and thriving nation like India where professionals and employees who are working with

stress and strain are more prone to tension type of headache especially in such a pandemic situation.

Charaka has defined *Vataja shira shoola* as severe pain in head, temples between eyebrows, dizziness, stiffness in neck, dissonance in ear and feeling like gauging of eyes and relieves on hot and unctuous things<sup>6</sup>. Sushruta told it increases at night/evening and decreases by bandaging a tight cloth over head<sup>7</sup>. Vagbhata added sensitivity to light<sup>8</sup>. *Samprapthi gataka* is given in figure no: 1<sup>9</sup>.

### Application of Ayurveda in management of tension headache

The aim of this paper is to evaluate the various scope of Ayurveda in prevention and treatment of TTH during this pandemic and which can be used as a reference in future for decreasing the cases of TTH in society and make them aware about the situation they are going through. This can be done by following Ayurveda and Yoga. This is cost effective and viable. In modern medical science the treatment is mainly symptomatic and only gives temporary relief. The administration of analgesics and anti-depressants for a long time will lead to serious side effects. Here the main focus is treatments which can be done at home or which is easy for the person to carry out, keeping in mind the current pandemic situation.

#### Steps of treatment include:

##### 1) *Dinacharya* or lifestyle:

- Waking up early in the morning “*brahme muhoorthe uthishtet*”<sup>10</sup>
- Sleeping early at night and on correct time, minimum 7 hours of sleep

##### 2) *Ahara*:

- Avoiding intake of *rooksha ahara* like fried items, chocolates, alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, junk foods.
- Intake of *Vata hara ahara* like adding milk, ghee into the diet<sup>11</sup>

3) *Vataja shirashoola chikitsa*: It includes *snehana*, *swedana*, *Vatahara vihara* and *nasya*. Susrutha and Vagbhata suggested *Vata Vyadhi chikitsa* and *Nasya*. Chakradatta suggested *shiro vasti* <sup>12</sup>, out of which we can adopt the following methods

- a) **Abhyanga:** With *Narayana Taila*, *Ksheerabala Taila*
- b) **Sneha paana:** with *Varunadi Ghritha* or with milk and ghee at night
- c) **Swedana:** *Upanaha sweda* by hot application of paste of *Agaru*
- d) **Virechana:** Trivruth lehya
- e) **Nasya:** With *Anu Taila* or *Shad Bindu Taila*
- f) **Yogas to be taken orally:** *Chitrakadi Vati*, *Vaishwanara Choornam*
- g) **Shiro Pichu:** The procedure like *shiropichu* can be even performed in the surrounding of a house hold also<sup>13</sup>. But treatment modalities which are prescribed in *Vataja shirashoola* like *Shiro vasti* and *Shiro dhara* will be difficult to perform in a household condition as it requires a physician's supervision.
- 4) Application of Yoga:** Yoga is considered as a noble way to handle stress. Stress is a general word, termed to various mental and bodily pressures experienced by people throughout life. Practicing yoga is considered as natural stress relief. Yoga is a mind body practice that combines stretching exercises, controlled breathing and relaxation. By practicing different types of *pranayama* like *Bhastrika*, *Kapalhati*, *Bahya pranayama*, *Bhramari* and practicing *asanas* like *Uttanasan*, *Paschimottasan*, *Adhomukasana*, *Shavasana* will help in relief of stress and in turn relief from TTH<sup>14</sup>.

## DISCUSSION

### Probable mode of action of treatment:

- ❖ **Pathyahara vihara:** As we are treating it as *Vataja shirashoola*, here we are including ghee and milk in diet which act as *brahmana* and *Vata hara*. More about what should be taken and what should not be is shown in Table no:2
  - ❖ **Vihara:** Activities which does not increase stress or *Vata* should be followed, as shown in Table no: 3<sup>15</sup>
  - ❖ **Abhyanga:** Is *Vatahara*, *Puhstida*, *Nidrajanaka*, *sramahara*. It acts on skin, as it is the site of *Vata*. Oil applied directly to skin mitigates *Vata*<sup>16</sup>.
  - ❖ **Sneha Pana:** *Varunadi Ghritha* does *Srotho Shudi* as well as *Vata Anulamana*.
  - ❖ **Upanaha sweda:** *Agaru* due to its *ushna* property it acts against the *sheeta* property of *Vata* and help in mitigating *shirashoola*.
  - ❖ **Virechana:** Is indicated as it does detoxification of body and it maintains the normal pathway of *Prana* and *Udana vayu* in body and does *Vata anulomana*<sup>17</sup>.
  - ❖ **Nasya:** Here due to *Vata prakopa*, *Bruhmana nasya* is indicated, as it is said in the classics '*Nasa hi shiraso dwaram*'. The drug administered through nostril reaches *shringataka sira marma* and reaches *murdha* and eliminates morbid *doshas* and helps in nourishment<sup>18</sup>.
  - ❖ **Orally:** "*Roga Sarve Api Mandagni Jayate*"<sup>19</sup>. Thus, the root cause of all disease is *mandagni* or improper digestion. We have to treat the *agni* and bring it to normalcy by means of giving *deepana* and *pachana* drugs or the drug which act as both. After the *agni* become *sama*, we have to administer *Vata anulomana* drugs, which result in proper movement of *Apana Vayu*, Resulting in alleviation of disease. The properties of drugs are shown in Table no: 1.
  - ❖ **Shiro pichu:** controls pacifies and expels the morbid *Vayu*, it has relaxing and coolant effect on the brain and nervous system and hence releases stress and anxiety, the master gland pituitary and the hypothalamus are relaxed by it and the circulation and nutrients take place in a proper way. TTH caused by sustained contraction of skeletal muscle gets relieved by physical effect of *Shiro pichu*. During *Shiro pichu* the absorption of substance takes place very well as it has more duration of contact and skin over scalp is thin<sup>20</sup>.
- Yoga:** Practice of Yoga helps in stress headache. According to Patanjali Yogasutra 'it is restraint of the activities of the mind'. Bhagavat Gita says it is the evenness of mind. In Yoga breathing using diaphragm can stimulate Vagus nerve, it is the main parasympathetic nerve extends from the medulla through the diaphragm to abdomen and responsible for slowing respiration, reducing heart rate, lowering blood pressure, stimulating digestive activity, thus it gives relief from stress and

help in preventing or treating of tension type of headache<sup>21</sup>. Another important aspect leading to *Vataja shirashoola* is controlling of urges or *adharaniya vegas*, one should not control their natural urges as it causes increase in *Vata*. '*Swasthasya Swastya Rakshanam*'<sup>22</sup> As Ayurveda says prevention is better than cure. By following proper diet, lifestyle we can manage the occurrence of tension type of headaches which is the most prevalent type of headache, especially which is seemed to be increased during the time of this pandemic. Due to lockdown effect most people have changed their lifestyle into a more sedentary one. Thus, by making them aware about its consequences and guiding them properly, we can manage it.

## CONCLUSION

Ayurveda one of the most ancient sciences has given so much importance to lifestyle, stating that medicine only plays half of the role in treatment of a disease and other half is managed by *ahara & vihara*. This statement has a great value in the current society, which has been hit by one of the worst pandemic that this world has seen. Tension types of headaches are one of such cases which have seen an increase in number during this period. Thus, by taking it as *Vataja Shirashoola* and treating it by means of its *Chikitsa sutra* we can manage it. Ayurveda as well as Yoga helps to guide an individual to lead a proper lifestyle and diet pattern by which he will be relieved from the stress created in day to day life. Thus, by nullifying stress through Ayurveda we can manage tension type of headache in cost effective and a viable way.

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**Table 1:**

SI No	Medicine name	Pharmacological effect
1	Chitrakadi vati	Deepana, Pachana, Rochana, Grahi, Shulahara.
2	Vaiswanara choorna	Vatanulomana, sula hara, Vedanasamana, Vibandha hara, Deepana, Pachana

**Table 2: Pathya and apathya**

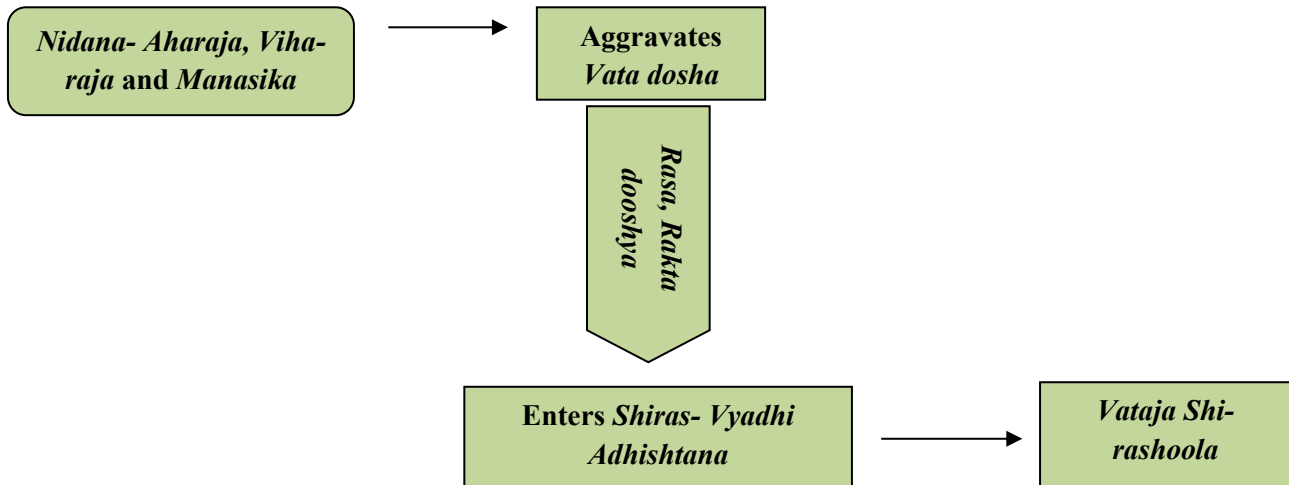
SI no:	Do's	Don't's
1)	<i>Snigdha Ushna, Guru, Ahara</i>	<i>Rooksha, Sheeta, Laghu Ahara</i>
2)	<i>Ahara With Madhura, Amla, Lavana Rasa Predominant</i>	<i>Ahara With Katu, Thiktha.Kashaya Rasa Predominant</i>
3)	<b>Shaali Varga:</b> <i>Raktha Shaali, Shashtika, Godhuma</i>	<b>Shaali Varga:</b> <i>Chinnaruda, Yava</i>
4)	<b>Shimbi Dhaanya:</b> <i>Kulatha, Masha, Tila, Sarshapa</i>	<b>Shimbi Dhaanya:</b> <i>Mudga, Raja Masha, Chanaka</i>
5)	<b>Mamsa Varga:</b> <i>Anupa Mamsa, Matsya, Kukkuta, Mahisha</i>	<b>Mamsa Varga:</b> <i>Jangala Mamsa</i>
6)	<b>Shaaka Varga:</b> <i>Kushmanda, Changeri, Bimbi</i>	<b>Shaaka Varga:</b> <i>Patola, Karavellaka, Surana, Palakya, Thanduliya</i>
7)	<b>Phala Varga:</b> <i>Pakva Amraphala, Panasa, Pakwa Ppitha, Dadima, Narangaadali, Narikela,</i>	<b>Phala Varga:</b> <i>Bala Amraphala, Pakva Vrksamla</i>
8)	<b>Harita Varga:</b> <i>Ardra, Jambira, Balamulaka, Dhanyaka, Palandu, Lasuna</i>	<b>Harita Varga:</b> <i>Shigru</i>
9)	<b>Gorasa Varga:</b> <i>Gavya Paya, Avi Ksheera, Dadhi, Takra, Navneeta, Go Ghritha</i>	<b>Gorasa Varga:</b> <i>Mahisha Ksheera, Apakwa Dugdha</i>
10)	<b>Ikshu Varga:</b> <i>Ikshu, Guda, Sita, Khanda Sharkara</i>	<b>Ikshu Varga:</b> <i>Madhu</i>
11)	<b>Krittanna Varga:</b> <i>Manda, Peya, Vilepi, Mamsa Rrasa, Payasa, Rasala, Kullatha Yoosha</i>	<b>Krittanna Varga:</b> <i>Mudga Yoosha, Laja, Yava Rotika</i>
12)	<b>Ahara Varga:</b> <i>Tila Tila, Eranda Taila, Pipali, Maricha, Hingu, Saindhava</i>	<b>Ahara Varga:</b> <i>Kshara</i>

**Table 3: Avoidance of following Vihara**

• <i>Vega dharana: Shakrt, Mutra, Jrm bha, Chardi, Kshavathu, Bashpa</i>
• <i>Ati vyayama</i>
• <i>Ratri jagarana</i>
• <i>Ati vyavaya</i>
• <i>Diwaswapna</i>
• <i>Manasika factors like: Chinta, Bhaya, Krodha, Shoka</i>

**Figures**

**Figure 1: Samprapthi of Vataja shirashoola:**



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