

Mounting stress linked to chronic headaches

Fortunately, the latest science unveils natural fast-acting remedies for the 56 percent of American women who struggle with both

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New findings from the American Psychological Association show that anxiety and tension are hitting women in a particularly painful way: 56 percent surveyed said their stress levels are leading to headaches. "When stress mounts, muscles become tense," explains Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., author of *Pain Free 1-2-3!* (Deva Press). "This puts the squeeze on nerves, triggering headaches that only add to one's overall stress." And finding relief isn't as straightforward as it might seem: "Over-the-counter pain relievers don't address underlying emotional tension, so pain can easily return," notes Dr. Teitelbaum. That's why *First* found natural two-in-one remedies that are proven to soothe headaches and restore calm.

BACK-OF-THE-HEAD PAIN?

Get a whiff of this

FOREHEAD PAIN?
Press this point
 Studies in China and elsewhere show that stimulating certain *acupoints* on the body can ease pain situated in the lower forehead, known as the *supraorbital region*. Western experts theorize that acupressure overrides pain-producing nerve signals and triggers the release of endorphins (natural opiates that soothe anxiety and pain), while practitioners of Eastern medicine offer another view: "Acupressure frees up stagnant *chi*, or life energy, relieving discomfort and restoring balance," explains Greg Sperber, M.D., a Chinese-medicine and acupuncture specialist in San Diego. To nip forehead pain, he advises working the acupressure point known as *Large Intestine 4*. To do: Relax one hand and use the thumb of your opposite hand to firmly press into the fleshy area between your index finger and thumb. (You should feel a dull ache when you press.)

Hold for 15 seconds, then release.

BACK-OF-THE-HEAD PAIN?

Get a whiff of this

The scent of peppermint is proven to relieve *occipital* pain, the type that radiates from the back of the head. "The occipital region is rich in nerve-cell structures called *C fibers*, which transmit pain-promoting messages in response to tension," explains Alan Hirsch, M.D., neurological director of the Smell & Taste Treatment and Research Foundation in Chicago. "But peppermint's sharp odor stimulates the *trigeminal nerve*, which helps counteract C-fiber signals." Plus, in a study at Wheeling Jesuit University in West Virginia, subjects who inhaled the minty scent experienced significant reductions in frustration and anxiety. To reap the benefits, stash a small bottle of peppermint oil (like Florestas Organic Botanicals Peppermint Essential Oil, \$7 for .34 oz., at WebVitamins.com) in your purse and inhale the scent for several deep breaths as needed.

PAIN IN THE TEMPLES?

Snack on these

Eating just 12 almonds can soothe throbbing temples in 15 minutes—as quickly as swallowing pills, maintains Carolyn Dean, M.D., N.D., coauthor of *The Complete Natural Medicine Guide to Women's Health* (Robert Rose, 2005). "Pain that's seated along the sides of the head is typically due to clenching, as well as pressure in the jaw and *temporal muscles*," she explains. "Crunching almonds works these muscles to physically release tightness, plus the nuts contain aspirin-like compounds called *salicylates*." Almonds are also a great source of magnesium, an easily depleted mineral proven to relax muscles and

help the body cope with anxiety.