

# What causes a *headache*?

## Inflammation

They are caused by an underlying medical condition, such as meningitis or irritation of the spine, neck, ears, sinuses, or teeth.

## Traction

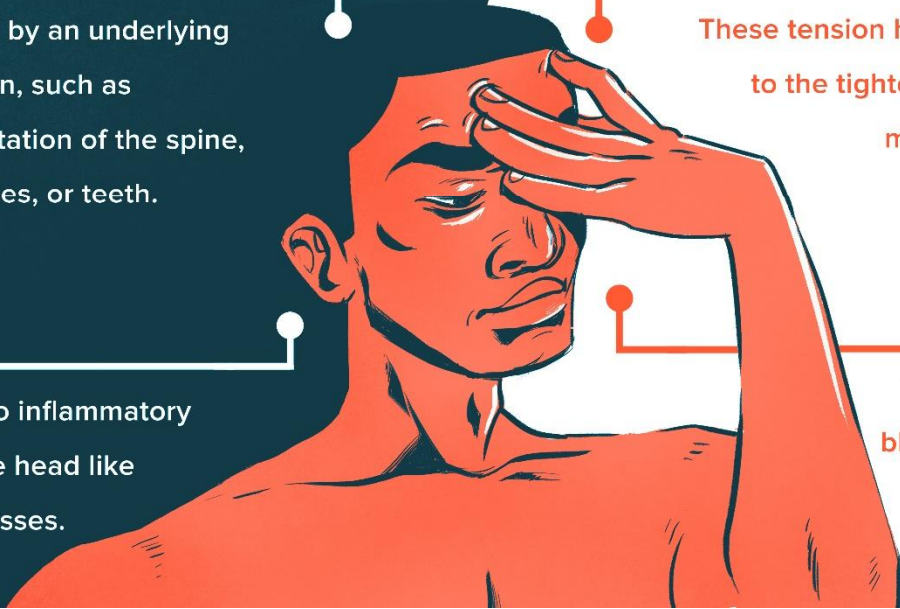
These are due to inflammatory conditions in the head like tumors or abscesses.

## Muscle Contraction

These tension headaches are due to the tightening or tensing of muscles in the face.

## Vascular

This type is due to blood flow changes, such as from high blood pressure.



“Let’s turn our attention to a common ailment for which many people reach for an NSAID, or perhaps a stronger prescription medication. *(please refer to previous article on the page **The Risk of Over the Counter Drugs NSAID’s.**)*

Let’s talk about headaches, how to avoid them, and how to treat them without harmful or addictive drugs.

Common classifications of primary headaches include migraine, cluster, and tension. However, you should know that while the triggers of these three primary types of headaches differ, the physiological (*neurological and vascular*) mechanisms that results in the pain that you experience are the same. So, no matter what the cause (*trigger*) is for your headache the body’s pain response in the brain, is the same.

### **Triggers of Headaches:**

There are many known triggers for the primary kinds of headaches and some people have triggers unique to them. These triggers include: *(abbreviated list)*

- o Hormonal changes*
- o Fluctuations in estrogen*
- o Menstruation*
- o Pregnancy*
- o Hormonal medications*
- o Oral contraceptives*

- o Hormone replacement therapy*
- o Foods high in tannic acid*
- o Alcohol, especially red wine*
- o Caffeinated beverages*
- o Salt*
- o Aged cheeses*
- o Salty foods*
- o Processed foods*
- o Food additives*
- o Aspartame*
- o Monosodium glutamate*

....and this is the short list. Add to this list weather changes and certain vapors, fumes, and smells. But the list goes on!

### **Identify your triggers:**

The first step in headache management and reduction is to identify your personal triggers. I have two tools that help with that. One, I have a headache checklist. Two, I have a format for a headache journal. If you want copies of either of these tools, message me on Facebook.

After, and through the process of journaling, you have identified your headache triggers the next step is to eliminate or reduce the foods, beverages, and other factors that are within your control. If changes in weather, such as rainy and humid days, are a trigger you cannot control the weather. But if florescent lights are a trigger you can change your light bulbs. If stress and eye strain from a computer screen or your tablet are a trigger you can dim your screen, change the screen setting from blue to a warmer yellow, and/or reduce your screen time.

I have found, after treating hundreds of patients for headache complaints, that simply identifying your triggers, and eliminating them, can reduce chronic headaches by 75 percent. Add, to this regular exercise to improve blood flow, tone the sympathetic nervous system, increase tissue oxygenation, and break your cycle of stress, and you can become almost headache free.

### **Treating your headaches – Herbal medicine:**

There are many herbs recommended in popular books or online for the treatment and/or prevention of headaches. Some I have found to be useless (*Feverfew*), and others such as Tang Kuei (*Dong Quai*), also known as *Angelica Sinensis*, to be highly effective and invaluable.

To the women reading this post, Dong Quai is probably an herb that you have heard of. It has been used for centuries by women for menopausal disorders. Tang Kuei is the Chinese name and I specifically use it in an herbal combination called Tang Kuei Four which is readily available from several sources online, my preference being a form that is manufactured by a company called Sun Ten.”

**This Article was Written by,  
Dr Gregory Lawton.  
My Teacher at the BHA.**



## *Angelica Sinensis*



*Angelica Sinensis* (*Dong Quai*) is a perennial plant that is found at high altitudes in the mountainous regions of Japan, China and Korea. The thick, light brown root of the Dong Quai herb has been valued for thousands of years for its vast array of medicinal applications.

**Dong Quai Contains Phytoestrogens:** Dong quai contains phytoestrogens that either enhance estrogenic activity if hormone levels are too low or compete with the hormone if estrogen levels are too high. Increasing estrogen helps ease various menopause symptoms.

**Dong Quai Increases Metabolic Actions:** When tested on animals, Dong quai works to boost metabolism and increase oxygen use in the liver (*treating hepatitis and cirrhosis*). It may also contain vitamin B-12 and folic acid.

**Dong Quai Contains Immune System Strengthening Properties:** It is believed Dong quai has an anti-allergy element. It has proven positive effects on the immune system, showing the ability to produce protein and stimulate lymphocytes. It also enhances and activates white blood cell activity.

**Dong Quai Has Muscle Relaxing Properties:** Dong quai's root is known to contain the following properties: hypotensive, tonic, anti-asthmatic, analgesic, anti-inflammatory and anti-arthritis.

### **How Dong Quai Works on the Body**

Dong quai works primarily as a tonic in the blood, nourishing cells, tissues and organs, focusing on the hormonal and immune systems. The herb contains coumarin which is known to prevent

blood clots while also having an anti-inflammatory and anti-spasmodic effect. As mentioned above, Dong quai also has estrogen-like properties.

### **Modern Uses of Dong Quai**

Though used primarily for women, Dong quai has many properties that enable it to cure or ease symptoms in both genders.

### **Properties of Dong Quai**

*Analgesic*

*Anti-inflammatory*

*Antispasmodic*

*Blood Tonic*

*Diuretic*

*Emmenagogue*

*Sedative*

As a blood purifier, it works to boost circulation, stabilize blood pressure, dilate peripheral blood vessels, and nourish the blood. It also eases chronic pelvic disorders and headaches caused by blood deficiencies.

As Dong quai is rich in iron, it is useful to prevent iron deficiency and anemia.

The herb is a mild sedative that can relieve stress, calm nerves, and combat insomnia.

Dong quai is a mild laxative and it moistens intestines and moves dormant stools. Dry intestine and constipation (particularly in the elderly) is often a result of deficient blood.

Dong quai sends oxygen to the liver which helps treat hepatitis and cirrhosis.

The herb can help remedy abdominal pain, traumatic injuries, mild injuries, arthritis, and migraines.

## **Contraindication and Warnings Below**

## **Dong quai Medication Interactions and Warning**

### **Are there safety concerns?**

Dong quai is POSSIBLY SAFE for adults when taken by mouth and when occasionally applied to the skin as an ingredient in a cream.

More evidence is needed to determine its safety after prolonged or repeated use.

Dong quai can cause skin to become extra-sensitive to the sun.

This might put you at greater risk for skin cancer.

Wear sun block outside, especially if you are light-skinned.

Taking dong quai in large amounts for a long period of time is POSSIBLY UNSAFE. Dong quai contains chemicals that are considered to be cancer-causing (*carcinogens*).

### **Special Precautions & Warnings:**

#### **Pregnancy and breast-feeding:**

Taking dong quai by mouth during pregnancy is POSSIBLY UNSAFE for the baby.

Dong quai seems to affect the muscles of the uterus.

There is also one report linking an herbal combination that contained dong quai with birth defects in a baby whose mother took the combination during the first three months of pregnancy.

Don't use dong quai if you are pregnant.

There isn't enough information about the safety of using dong quai during breast-feeding.

Stay on the safe side and don't use it.

#### **Bleeding disorders.**

Dong quai might slow blood clotting.

In theory, dong quai might increase the risk of bruising and bleeding in people with bleeding disorders.

#### **Hormone-sensitive conditions such as breast cancer, uterine cancer, ovarian cancer, endometriosis, or uterine fibroids:**

Dong quai might act like estrogen.

If you have any condition that might be made worse by exposure to estrogen, don't use dong quai.

### **Protein S deficiency:**

People with protein S deficiency have an increased risk of forming blood clots. There is some concern that dong quai might increase the risk of clot formation in these people because it has some of the effects of estrogen.  
Don't use dong quai if you have protein S deficiency.

### **Surgery:**

Dong quai can slow blood clotting.  
It might increase the risk of bleeding during and after surgery.  
Stop taking dong quai at least 2 weeks before a scheduled surgery.

### **Are there any interactions with medications?**

#### **Warfarin** (*Coumadin*)

Interaction Rating: Major Do not take this combination.  
Warfarin (*Coumadin*) is used to slow blood clotting.  
Dong quai can also slow blood clotting.  
Taking dong quai along with warfarin (*Coumadin*) can increase the chances of bruising and bleeding. Be sure to have your blood checked regularly.  
The dose of your warfarin (*Coumadin*) might need to be changed.

#### **Estrogens**

Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.  
Talk with your health provider.  
Dong quai might act like the hormone estrogen.  
When taken together, dong quai might increase the risk for side effects.

#### **Medications that slow blood clotting**

(*Anticoagulant / Antiplatelet drugs*)

Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.  
Talk with your health provider.  
Dong quai might slow blood clotting.  
Taking dong quai along with medications that also slow clotting might increase the chances of bruising and bleeding.

### **Some medications that slow blood clotting include**

aspirin, clopidogrel (*Plavix*), diclofenac (*Voltaren, Cataflam, others*), ibuprofen (*Advil, Motrin, others*), naproxen (*Anaprox, Naprosyn, others*), dalteparin (*Fragmin*), enoxaparin (*Lovenox*), heparin, warfarin (*Coumadin*), and others.

### **Be Careful of Overdoses**

The symptoms of a Dong quai overdose remain uncertain as the herb has yet to be evaluated by the FDA for safety, effectiveness, and purity. Furthermore, no regulated manufacturing standards exist for Dong quai compounds. It is suggested that standardized extracts, tinctures, and solid formulations of Dong quai supplements provide a reliable dose of the product. Again, consult a healthcare provider before taking Dong quai.

Also, keep in mind that unless directed to do so by a healthcare professional, different formulations of Dong quai (*tablets, teas, tinctures etc*) should not be used at the same time, in order to avoid an overdose.

### **Safety and Precautions**

Dong quai can increase the skin's sensitivity to sunlight or cause rashes and skin inflammation.

When taking Dong quai it's best to stay out of the sun and as always, use sunscreen. It is also believed that it can increase the risk of breast cancer, though the safety of this herb has yet to be proven. Dong quai should not be combined with pharmaceutical drugs or other herbs and dietary supplements. Dong quai should not be combined with pharmaceutical drugs or other herbs and dietary supplements. If you plan to use this herbal remedy, you need to speak with your doctor and your holistic practitioner before taking this or any other herbal for medicinal purposes.



**Neuromuscular Wellness**

*Health + Life + Balance*