

## Pycnogenol Now Found to Help Treat Migraines

By Greg Arnold, DC, CSCS, May 22, 2006, abstracted from "Use of a Pine Bark Extract and Antioxidant Vitamin Combination Product as Therapy for Migraine in Patients Refractory to Pharmacologic Medication" in the May 2006 issue of *Headache*

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Characterized by "attacks of intense...throbbing headache", migraine headache affects 10-20 % of the world population, with more women affected than men. While several theories have been proposed, the actual cause of migraine headache remains very complex and difficult to understand.<sup>1</sup>

Alternative therapies in the form of [butterbur extract and coenzyme Q10](#)<sup>2</sup> have been found effective in children. But little research has been done on alternative therapies for adults. Current treatment includes five groups of medications: beta-blockers,<sup>3</sup> calcium channel blockers,<sup>4</sup> tricyclic antidepressants,<sup>5</sup> anticonvulsants,<sup>6</sup> and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.<sup>7</sup>

Now a new study<sup>8</sup> has found that pycnogenol, a bark extract with [a number of health benefits](#),<sup>9</sup> may provide an alternative treatment for migraines in adults.

In the study, patients received 10 capsules containing 120 mg of pycnogenol, 60 mg of vitamin C, and 30 IU of vitamin E each day for three months. Each patient then received a neurological examination once per month and filled out a migraine disability assessment (MIDAS) questionnaire.<sup>10</sup> The MIDAS questionnaire consisted of five questions about the number of days of lost or limited productivity in the previous three months involving work, school, household work, and family, social, and leisure activities.

Not only did the researchers find "a significant improvement" in the MIDAS score, there were also "significant reductions" in both the number of headache days and headache severity. Specifically, the average number of headache days was reduced from 44.4 days at the beginning of the study to 26 days at the end of the study. Headache severity was reduced by nearly 27%.

For the researchers, "antioxidant therapy...may be beneficial in the treatment of migraine possibly reducing headache frequency and severity."

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