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Hair wash gives Indian women migraine

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WORLD OVER, headaches are as common as the common cold. But there is one type particular to Indians: a "hair wash" migraine. Hair washing is a common trigger for migraines among Indian women, reports Mumbai-based neurologist Dr K. Ravishankar in *Cephalalgia*, the Journal of the International Headache Society.

Hair wash migraines, described as 'headachess' that start after a 'head bath', are India's unique contribution to medical literature on migraine triggers. "Long hair that are washed two to three times a week and plaited while wet cause a gradual build up of pain that can lead up to a migraine," says Ravishankar, who heads the headache and migraine clinics at Jaslok Hospital

That splitting headache

MIGRAINE IS TRIGGERED BY:

- Bright light, loud noise, and strong smell (including perfume)
- Extreme weather
- Physical or emotional stress
- Sleeplessness
- Fasting, skipping meals
- Oily food, pickle
- Menstrual cycle fluctuations

SYMPTOMS

- Throbbing, pounding, or pulsating ache in one side of the head
- Lasts 6 to 48 hrs, if untreated
- May be accompanied by nausea or vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Numbness, tingling, or weakness
- Auras in the form of lines, tunnel vision, or a temporary blind spot
- Frequent yawning, sleepiness
- Stiffness of neck



and Lilavati Hospital respectively. Blow-drying hair lowers the risk of this type of migraine.

Ravishankar's study analysed the trigger link in 94 patients who fulfilled the International Headache Society criteria for migraine. In 11 patients, hair wash was the only trigger; in 45 patients hair wash was one of the triggers and in 38 patients hair wash was a trigger concurrently and in combination with another common trigger. Other factors that added to the pain, suggests Ravishankar, are sensitivity of temperature receptors in the body or even genetic predisposition.

Migraines are more common among women, with around 15-20 per cent of women in the reproductive age group experiencing it at least once a year, compared to 6-8 per cent of men. sanchitasharma@hindustantimes.com

HT GRAPHIC: HEMAL SHETH