

Why Do We Put on Tilak on the Forehead?

The Tilak is a mark of auspiciousness and invokes a feeling of respect in the wearer and others. It is recognized as a religious mark. Its form and color vary according to one's caste, religious sect or the form of worship of the person in question. Tilak is applied on the forehead with sandal paste, sacred ash or kumkum, a red turmeric powder. In a wedding, a Kumkum tilak is applied on the forehead of both the bride and groom.

In earlier times, the four castes (based on varna or color) – Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra – applied marks differently. The Brahmin applied a white chandan mark signifying purity, as his profession was of a priestly or academic nature. The Kshatriya applied a red kumkum mark signifying valor as he belonged to the warrior race. The Vaishya wore a yellow kesar or turmeric mark signifying prosperity as he was a businessman or trader devoted to creation of wealth. The Shudra applied a black bhasma, kasturi or charcoal mark signifying service as he supported the work of the other three castes.

The devotees of Shiva apply sacred ash (Bhasma) on the forehead as a Tripundra (three parallel horizontal

lines); the devotees of Vishnu apply sandal paste (Chandan) in the shape of "U" and the worshippers of Devi or Shakti apply Kumkum.

The Tilak is applied in the spot between the eyebrows, which is the seat of memory and thought. It is known as the Ajna Chakra in the language of Yoga. The Tilak is applied with the prayer – "May I remember the Lord. May this pious feeling pervade all my activities. May I be righteous in my deeds?" Even when we temporarily forget this prayerful attitude, the mark on another reminds us of our resolve. The Tilak is thus a blessing of the Lord and a protection against wrong tendencies and forces. The entire body emanates energy in the form of electromagnetic waves – the forehead and the spot between the eyebrows especially so. That is why worry generates heat and causes a headache. The Tilak cools the forehead, protects the wearer and prevents energy loss. Sometimes, the entire forehead is covered with chandan or bhasma.

Using plastic reusable "stick bindis" is not very beneficial, even though it serves the purpose of decoration.



Atopic Dermatitis: A Risk Factor for Incident Migraine?

The likelihood of occurrence of new-onset migraine is high in patients with atopic dermatitis (AD), suggests a study of nearly 50,000 AD published in the *Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology & Venereology*.^{1,2}

A team of researchers from South Korea screened 3.5 million adults, who had a health check-up done in 2009, from the Korean National Health Insurance Service claims database. Out of these, 48,983 adults (1.5%) were found to be diagnosed with AD. Over the median follow-up period of 7.6 years, 449,484 new-onset migraine cases were identified. The cumulative incidence of new-onset migraine was 21.8 per 1,000 person-years among patients with AD, whereas in patients without AD, the incidence of incident migraine was 16.5 per 1,000 person-years with hazard ratio (HR) of 1.26. Patients with moderate to severe AD were at higher risk of suffering new-onset migraine than patients with mild form of the disease (HR 1.26). Being male and a smoker further added to the risk. Similarly, AD patients with sleep disorders or stroke were also at risk of incident migraine. This study has shown an association of AD with new-development of migraine and has also identified factors associated with elevated risk. However, the authors state, "Further study is needed to examine whether appropriate management of AD can guard against the risk of new-onset migraine."²

References

1. Lee JH, et al. Association of atopic dermatitis with new-onset migraine: a nationwide population-based cohort study. *J Eur Acad Dermatol Venereol*. 2022 Oct 21. [Epub ahead of print]
2. Solomon L. Atopic dermatitis may be risk factor for new-onset migraine. Dec. 16, 2022. Available from: <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-12-atopic-dermatitis-factor-new-onset-migraine.html>. Accessed Dec. 17, 2022.