

DO YOU SUFFER FROM HEADACHES?

The pain and discomfort can be debilitating and negatively impact your mental and physical health. There are many types of headaches, and the distribution of pain allows for chiropractors to distinguish what type you may be suffering from. It is important to note, that the onset of a headache is a warning sign that some other part of your body is functioning incorrectly.



TYPES OF HEADACHES

Here are a few examples of the common types of headaches that walk into my practice.

CLUSTER HEADACHE



A Cluster headache is one of more severe types of headaches, characterized by intense, burning pain. Many sufferers experience problems with vision and hearing when suffering from a cluster headache.

SINUS HEADACHE



A sinus headache is caused by infections or other issues with the sinuses. Pain is usually felt in the cheekbones, forehead and bridge of the nose and is accompanied by nasal congestion or discharge.

MIGRAINE



It is believed that a Migraine headache is caused due to changes in the blood vessels of the brain. The symptoms of a migraine headache include throbbing or pounding pain, along with nausea, and sensitivity to light, sound, and smell.

TENSION HEADACHE



A common types of headache is a tension headache. It is described as feeling like there is a tight band around the head. While there are several contributors that can cause a tension headache, most people report experiencing them during times of stress or worry in their lives.

The chiropractor will perform a history exam followed by a physical assessment (including an orthopedic, neurological and palpation exam) to determine the exact cause and type of headache.

There are many factors to consider when investigating the root cause of the headache. Below are a few examples of common causes of headaches:

1	6
Stress	Sinus Infection
2	7
Lack of Sleep	Strained Eyes/Improper Eyewear
3	8
Dehydration	Clenching/Grinding of Jaw
4	9
Poor Diet/ Allergies	Postural Imbalances/Poor Ergonomic
5	10
Barometric Pressure Change	Subluxations - misalignment in the neck can cause irritation on the nerve roots and result in a headache

HOW TO TREAT A HEADACHE

The type of headache you suffer from, may require different treatment protocols. The intensity and impact on one's activities of daily living may result in a patient requiring strong medication, rest and reduced exposure to noise, bright lights, smells etc. However, chiropractic care has been shown to help alleviate headaches related to muscle tension while reducing the intensity and/or frequencies of migraines.

Our neck or cervical spine has 7 vertebrae each separated by a disc. Nerves exit the hole on each side of the vertebrae and when there is injury or excessive force, the nerve can become irritated. This can cause constriction in the blood vessels that supply the brain and produce a headache.

Treatment for headaches may include one or more of the following:

1. Chiropractic Manipulation or Mobilization
2. Soft Tissue Therapy – releasing trigger points within the affected muscles
3. Cold Laser Therapy – infrared/red light has been shown to help remove any lingering inflammation while rebuilding healthy tissue to the affected area
4. Gentle Stretching
5. Home Exercises

WHAT CAN YOU DO AT HOME TO HELP ALLEVIATE YOUR PAIN?

Although it is important to seek treatment whenever possible, here are a few suggestions you can do at home to help facilitate the healing process;



ICE – when placing an ice pack on your skin, ensure to wrap the ice pack in a towel. Do not directly place the ice on the skin as it can irritate the area. Place the ice pack at the base of the skull to decrease blood flow;



HEAT - a heating pad along your neck and shoulders will aid in relaxing the tense muscles;



SELF MASSAGE - Gently massaging the tight muscles in the shoulders and base of the neck will help relax the muscles whenever you feel the tension increase;



ERGONOMIC PILLOW - an ergonomic neck pillow will support the neck but prevent the head from being pushed forward during sleep

Be sure to keep the room cool, dark and noise to a minimum to prevent the headache from worsening.

STRETCHING EXERCISES

The following stretching exercises may be prescribed to work in tandem with your chiropractic treatments as a way of maintaining the benefits of your treatment:

NECK STRETCH



1. With your shoulders relaxed, stand with your back straight.
2. Bring your right ear down towards your shoulder and roll your head towards the ground.
3. Hold for a few seconds, and then roll your head to the left.
4. Roll your head back to a normal position.

BACK STRETCH



1. Find a place to position yourself on the floor (on all fours), with hands shoulder width apart, knees hip-width apart, and your back straight.
2. Arch your back towards the ceiling, and work your abs so as to pull your belly button down towards the floor.
3. Let your head gently fall into your arms.

SHOULDER STRETCH



1. Hold your left arm across your body and grab the back of the elbow with your right hand.
2. Gently pull the left elbow in as far as possible to allow the fingers of your right hand to reach your back.
3. Continue to hold this position for up to 30 seconds, and then repeat on the opposite side.

SUPPORTED NECK STRETCH

Take a towel and wrap it around your neck; pull the sides of the towel and slowly look up; Pull the towel while looking down; When turning the neck to the left, pull on the Right side of the towel to aid in turning your head; repeat on the other side;

Headaches can severely impact a person's life and as chiropractors our goal is to help minimize the effects of the headache so that you can get back to living your best life.