

Topic of the Week

Issue 2, September, 2009

WE CARE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

What Type of Headache Do You Get?

Presented by: Dr. Edwin Lau

Most of us experience the occasional headache. Whether it's throbbing, aching, pounding or stabbing, a headache can make our lives miserable. It also affects our ability to focus and may increase our sensitivity to external stimuli.

There are several types of headaches, and each one has a different cause. The most common headaches are tension, migraine, cervicogenic and cluster. Migraines are often considered to exist in a category of their own. (We'll discuss migraines in the next issue of Topic of the Week.)

Tension Headache

The tension headache is the most frequent type of headache in the general population.¹ It usually occurs most frequently in people susceptible to the effects of stress. This headache usually starts with tightness in the neck and shoulders, then progresses to pain at the base of the skull. The forehead and temples may also ache.



Presented by:
Dr. Edwin Lau, Dr. Edwin Lau
1202 Homer Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 2Y5, (604) 642-6464
elaul183@hotmail.com

Cervicogenic Headache

A cervicogenic headache originates from disorders of the neck. This type of headache is often preceded by awkward neck movement or positioning (such as painting a ceiling, or washing a floor). It's usually accompanied by restricted range of motion in the neck and pain in the shoulder, neck or arm.

Treatment for Tension and Cervicogenic Headaches

A frequent cause of both tension and cervicogenic headaches is irritation of the nerves leading to the scalp. These nerves exit the spine close to the base of the skull and pass around or directly through several layers of muscle tissue. If this area of the spine is restricted or the muscles in this location are extra tight, the nerves in the scalp can get irritated.

When related with neck pain and stiffness, these headaches can generally be effectively treated with chiropractic.²⁻⁵ Sometimes the relief from chronic headaches can be immediate and dramatic.⁶

Exercise of the Week

Plank Position with Feet on Ball

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate

(Consult your chiropractor before starting this or any other exercise.)

Start: Lie on ball, face down. Place hands on floor and lift both legs to position body in a push-up (plank) position. Keep abdominals contracted (tummy tucked in) and spine straight.

Exercise: Walk hands forward, maintaining a steady plank position. Most difficult position: only feet are left on ball. Hold at finish position for 15-30 seconds. Walk hands back to start position.

Repeat 3-5 times.



Massage and trigger point therapy applied to the tight muscles may also reduce the symptoms associated with this type of headache.



Cluster Headache

Cluster headaches are relatively rare - affecting only 0.1% of the population. About 85% of cluster headache sufferers are male.⁷ This headache is distinct from migraine and tension headaches. It typically features intense bouts of stabbing pain felt in very specific focal areas of the skull. The pain usually occurs in clusters, and it can last from minutes to hours. The discomfort typically centers around one eye, and this eye may be inflamed and watery. Nasal congestion sometimes occurs on the affected side of the face. It's suspected that cluster headaches are related to the sinuses.

This type of headache is not usually as responsive to chiropractic treatments as other headaches. But it's a good idea to have your chiropractor check your neck to rule out any involvement of this area.

What Can I Do to Prevent Headaches?

Follow these simple tips:

- Manage your stress - try meditation, relaxation exercises and taking regular breaks from your schedule.
- Exercise regularly - cardiovascular exercise helps your muscles, circulatory system and sense of well being.
- Watch your posture - the muscles that hold your head upright are the same as those that contribute to headaches. Practice good posture to reduce stress on these muscles.
- Drink plenty of fresh water - dehydration is a common cause of headaches, muscle tightness and fatigue. Drink a minimum of eight cups per day.
- Have your spine checked regularly for misalignment/subluxations by your chiropractor - correcting misalignment before symptoms appear can save you a lot of grief.



Quote of the Week

"Life is but the expression of spirit through matter. To make life manifest requires the union of spirit & body."
- D.D. Palmer, DC

For more health tips, visit online www.citruspie.com



References and Sources:

1. Loder E & Rizzoli P. Clinical Review: Tension-type headache. *BMJ* 2008; 336: 88-92.
2. McCrory DC, Penzien DB, Hasselblad V & Gray RN. Evidence Report: Behavioral and Physical Treatments for Tension-type and Cervicogenic Headache. *Duke University Evidence-based Practice Center, Center for Clinical Health Policy Research, Durham NC.*
3. Bronfort G, Assendelft WJ, Evans R, Haas M & Bouter L. Efficacy of spinal manipulation for chronic headache: a systematic review. *J Manipulative Physiol Ther.* 2001; 24(7): 457-466.
4. Haas M, Group E, Aickin M, Fairweather A, Ganger B, Altwood M, Cummins C & Baffes L. Dose response for chiropractic care of chronic cervicogenic headache and associated neck pain: a randomized pilot study. *J Manip Physiol Ther.* 2004; 27(9): 547-551.
5. Nilsson N, Christensen HW & Hartvigsen J. The effect of spinal manipulation in the treatment of cervicogenic headache. *J Manip Physiol Ther.* 1997; 20(5): 325-330.
6. Lisi AJ & Dabrowski Y. Chiropractic Spinal Manipulation for Cervicogenic Headache in an 8-Year-Old. *J Neuro-musculoskeletal System* 2002; 10(3): 98-103.
7. Fischers M, Marzoniak M, Gratow I & Evers S. The incidence and prevalence of cluster headache: a meta-analysis of population-based studies. *Cephalgia.* 2006; 26(6): 614 - 618.

Topic of the Week

newsletters are written and designed by **Mediadoc** exclusively for its chiropractic clients.

Writer/Editor: David Coyne
Writer: Dr. Christian Guenette, DC
Design: Elena Zhukova
Photos: Fred Goldstein

Disclaimer: Information contained in this Topic of the Week™ Newsletter is for educational and general purposes only and is designed to assist you in making informed decisions about your health. Any information contained herein is not intended to substitute advice from your physician or other healthcare professional.

