

Headaches and Chiropractic

Understanding Your Headaches

Stress. Tension. Neck Pain. Headache. This is the common journey for more than 50 million Americans suffering from “cephalgia” or headaches. Although the International Headache Society has classified 129 different types of headaches, there are 3 that are the most common. These include migraines, tension-type, and cervicogenic (cervico =neck and genic = originating from, or a headache originating from the neck). Almost 9 million suffer from “chronic tension-type headaches,” which is defined as experiencing more than 180 headaches per year! Another 7million experienced cervicogenic headaches more than 5 times per month, and approximately 11 million suffer from debilitating migraines.

Diagnosis - The First Step

The key to treating any condition is the proper diagnosis of that condition. To properly diagnose your headache, you and your doctor will work as a team. Some of the important characteristics to address are frequency (how often you experience headaches), severity (the rating of your pain on a 10 scale with 10 being the highest pain level), the location of your headache (one side, both sides, behind the eyes, starts in the neck, etc.), and other factors like seeing flashes of light, or associated nausea and/or vomiting.

Treatment- Research is the Key

Due to the huge cost of headaches to society, research for treatment alternatives has drawn some considerable attention. Some of the most current research compares physical treatment (chiropractic, physiotherapy, and massage), medicine (prescriptions), and behavioral therapy (such as biofeedback and relaxation techniques). A landmark research study conducted by the prestigious Duke University reported that chiropractic adjustments/treatment in the cervical (neck area) resulted in immediate improvement of cervicogenic headaches. Furthermore, when compared to soft-tissue therapies (massage), a course of chiropractic adjustments resulted in sustained improvement in headache frequency and severity. In treating tension headaches, chiropractic care was compared to a common medication called amitriptyline. One month after a six-week course of treatment, patients who had received chiropractic care were significantly better than those who had taken amitriptyline for both headache frequency and severity.

Patients have known for years that chiropractic care had been effective at treating their headaches. It's nice to see that science is finally catching up!

If you or someone you know is suffering from headaches, a complete Chiropractic evaluation may be the first step to freedom from pain.

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