

# How to Help and Prevent Headaches and Migraines



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# INTRODUCTION

The most concerning answer I hear in practice when it comes to headaches or migraines is when I ask:

How long have you been suffering with this?

After working with thousands of patients, the answer I always hear is 5-10-15 years! While every patient is different and the causations are many and varied.

## **WITH ALL OUR PATIENTS WE ADOPT A 3-PHASE APPROACH:**

- 1.** Identify the type of headache or migraine you suffer from?
- 2.** What is the cause of the trigger?
- 3.** How can we implement management strategies as part of your life and not just in the moment of crisis?

We look forward to helping you reach a greater level of understanding and equipping you with strategies that will help you.



# WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

## Tension

pain is like a band squeezing the head.



## TENSION HEADACHE

This is the most common type of headache among adults and teenagers. Tension headaches are also known as stress headaches, chronic daily headaches or chronic non-progressive headaches. Causing mild to moderate chronic pain, they come and go over time.

- The pain can radiate from the lower back of the head, the neck, eyes, or other muscle groups in the body typically affecting both sides of the head.
- Often described as pain that feels like a tight band around the head or a weight on top of it.
- Dull and persistent pain that can vary in intensity.
- Neck movements are often restricted by muscular stiffness and discomfort.
- The pain can last from 30-minutes to several days.
- Occurs without warning.
- No throbbing, No nausea, No light or noise sensitivity, rarely starts during sleep.

## Neck

pain is at the top and/or back of head.



## CERVICOGENIC HEADACHE

If your headache is related to a problem in your neck or the surrounding muscles, then there is a good chance it's a cervicogenic headache. This is the most common headache we take care of. It is most often associated with some form of postural stress, past injuries or tension in the upper back region. We don't diagnose it with xrays but having this imaging will often reveal degenerative changes taking place with the neck causing changes to the joints, nerves and muscles. The patients with cervicogenic headaches will often have the following:

- Reduced movement of the neck and worsening headaches with certain movements.
- Pain or increased headaches with pressure on the neck.
- The headaches are often one-sided.
- Steady pain that doesn't throb.
- Pain may radiate from the neck/back of head up and over to the front of the head or behind the eye.
- Head pain increases when the patient coughs, sneezes or takes a deep breath.
- Symptoms may last for hours or days.

### **Cluster**

pain is  
in and  
around  
one eye.



## **CLUSTER HEADACHE**

These headaches are the most severe, but less common type. The pain can feel like a burning or piercing pain behind the eyes. Cluster headaches tend to occur in succession over a period of time lasting from a couple of weeks to several months. They can disappear for months or years but then come back.

### **Sinus**

pain is  
behind  
browbone  
and/or  
cheekbone.



## **SINUS HEADACHE**

Inflamed sinuses can cause pain or a pressure sensation which is experienced in your cheeks, forehead, nose, and behind your eyes. Usually other sinus symptoms, such as a runny nose, fever, pressure in the ears occur at the same time. We'll often see this at particular times of the year with allergies and winter bringing on infections.

### **TMJ**

pain is at  
temples,  
in front  
of ears.



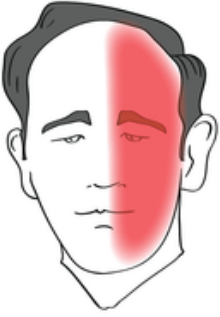
## **TMJ HEADACHE**

This type of headache will often feel like a tension headache and can be associated with symptoms such as tight jaw muscles, jaw and face pain, clicking noise in the jaw or inability to fully open the mouth. If you find yourself clenching or are aware of grinding occurring at night, it may be considered indicative and often we see patients waking with a headache.



### **Migraine**

pain, nausea and visual changes are typical of classic form.



## **MIGRAINES**

Anyone who suffers from migraines knows just how debilitating the pain can be and the disruptions they can cause to everyday life. They can affect anyone but we have found them to be more prevalent in women and throughout the ages of 30-50 years. Often patients will get the early warning signs that a migraine is developing with progressive onset of blurred vision, flashes in vision, tingling or numbness in regions of the face.

Migraines can last from a few hours to a few days and usually occur one or more times a month. People usually have other symptoms with migraines, including:

- Sensitivity to light, noise or smells
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Flashing lights
- Blurry vision
- Difficulty speaking and forming words
- Partial and temporary paralysis
- Decrease or loss of hearing
- Reduced sensation



# HOW TO HELP AND PREVENT HEADACHES AND MIGRAINES



## IDENTIFY THE TRIGGERS

While it's not always possible, you will often find that over time there may be specific triggers that will set off your headaches or migraines. It's important to be very mindful of different events, patterns or foods that may contribute. Below is a list of common triggers that we have identified throughout the years:

- Sleep pattern changes
- Stressful events
- Menstruation
- Caffeine
- Chemical exposure
- Fumes
- Bright lights
- Stress

Food is a big one. Below is a list of foods that are common triggers:

- Chocolate
- Aged Cheeses
- Red wines
- MSG
- Peanuts
- Dairy products
- Citrus fruits

Essentially, we want to help you identify what your triggers may be and how we can manage your exposure to them.



## RELAXATION

The environment we now live in is faster paced, more committed, more connected than ever before. I often equate our life to a long power board. Every connection has a plug in it, and if we take one out we just replace it with something else. Technology was meant to make our lives easier, now it means we are available every minute of the day and our ability to just 'turn off' is near non-existent. Research has found that prolonged stress has extensive detrimental impacts to so many aspects of our physical and mental wellbeing. Its obvious given the often stressful environment we now live in can cause headaches and migraines to develop and worsen.

With this in mind, its important a pro-active approach is taken to learning and implementing relaxation strategies. While I don't suffer from migraines I can identify with the struggle of 'turning off'. My mind is always racing in multiple directions in what seems like 1000 miles an hour. Its almost impossible to just sit down and 'try and relax'. These are some ideas that can help facilitate that process;

- Guided yoga routine
- Using a Meditation app
- Tai Chi
- Deep breathing routine
- Mindfulness colouring book
- Journaling or Prayer
- Soaking in warm bath with relaxing music
- Art therapy
- Relaxation massage

Reading the list above, you might hear yourself saying 'oh that's not for me, I could never do that'. I hear you.. while you might not identify yourself with doing any of these activities, however I encourage you to ask yourself the question, if they could reduce the frequency and intensity of your headache or migraine would you give it a go? Let the results motivate the process.



## EXERCISE AND STRETCHES

Specific stretches and exercises can have a positive impact in alleviating and managing tension and cervicogenic headaches. For many of us who are sitting all day, looking at iPads, phones and computers, there will inevitably be tension build up in the muscle of the neck and shoulders. An assessment will typically identify what muscles to focus on, but these stretches are a great start to reducing tension in the head, neck and shoulders.

**1. CHIN TUCKS**

**2. SUBOCCIPITAL RELEASE**

**3. TRAP STRETCH**

**Book a Headache/Migraine Consultation today**

**BOOK NOW**

