

Why Your Head Hurts

At one time or another we've all experienced throbbing or stabbing pains in our heads. Because the head controls the rest of the body, nothing else can get your attention quite so immediately or completely. If there were only one cause of headaches the treatment would be a lot easier. However, headaches come in many different shapes and sizes, and the causes can be equally complex. There is no one simple answer.

Headaches can be triggered by physical or emotional stress, toxic fumes, certain foods, preservatives, alcohol, bright light, trauma, hormonal changes, too much or too little sleep, allergies, or blood pressure to name just a few causes. Another frequently overlooked cause of headaches is misaligned spinal bones in the neck and upper back. When spinal bones lose their normal position and motion, delicate nerves and blood vessels to the head can be affected.

One thing is certain. A recurring headache is a sign that something is wrong. While pain-relievers like aspirin may temporarily ease discomfort, they also mask the symptoms. They do nothing to correct the

source of the problem. And while the problem remains, the headaches will come back... again and again.

What Type Of Headache Do I Have?

There are specific labels for many types of headaches, but when your head is pounding, it's hard to care. By far, tension headaches are the most common type in the United States and may affect as much as 95% of the population at one time or another.

Tension Headaches

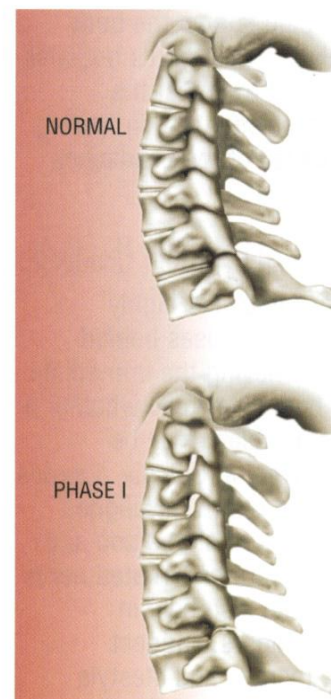
Tension headache sufferers report dull, steady pain on one or both sides of the head and often a feeling of vice-like tightness. Typically, these headaches begin with physical or mental stress that causes contractions of muscles in the neck, back, and head. These prolonged contractions rob the muscles of oxygen, making them release chemicals that transmit "referred" pain signals to the brain.

So many seemingly innocent things can trigger a tension headache, it's often hard to pinpoint a cause. Emotional stress from a job, home, or relationship can cause muscle tension. Sitting for long periods hunched over a desk or computer, gripping a telephone between the shoulder and ear, driving in heavy traffic or bad weather, adjusting to new lenses in glasses—all these things can cause muscles to tighten in the neck and back.

Physical stress from pain in another part of the body, often spinal problems, can also cause chronic muscle contractions leading to tension headaches.

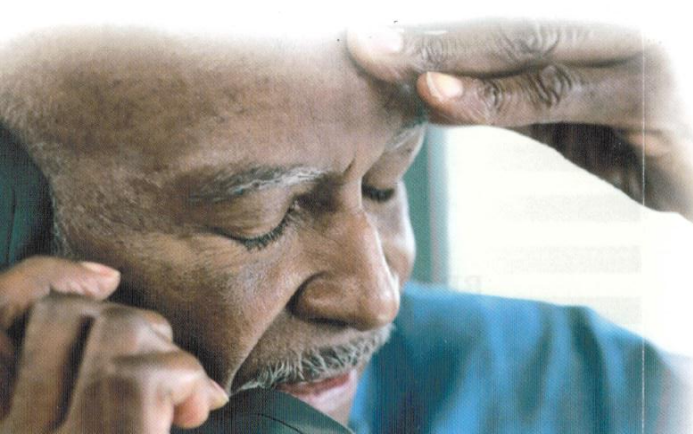
Vascular Headaches

This category of intensely throbbing, stabbing headaches occur when blood vessels supplying the scalp and brain rapidly dilate. It includes migraines and cluster headaches. Migraine sufferers are often completely debilitated, feeling nausea and unable to bear noise or light, from a few hours to a few days while the migraine lasts. Even worse, can be cluster headaches, so-called because they occur in clusters, lasting from 10 minutes to three hours up to eight times a day.



Vertebrogenic Headaches

These headaches caused by problems within the cervical (neck) spine are felt in the back, sides and front of the head or the front



of the face or neck. Changes in the normal curvature of the neck caused by trauma, degenerative arthritis, or poor posture can cause chronic irritation to vertebral nerve roots. The onset of pain is sudden or acute, and may also cause muscle tension in the neck bringing on tension headaches as well.

When Should You Seek Help For Your Headache?

When headaches are frequent or recur over time, they can make life miserable. Everything else becomes secondary to the pain. But remember, pain is how the body tells us that something is wrong. It's not wise to ignore the signals and treat just the symptoms. Seek professional help in finding and eliminating the cause of the headaches from your Chiropractor.

How Chiropractic Care Can Help Your Headache

A Doctor of Chiropractic is highly experienced in finding the causes behind headaches as well as relieving the immediate pain. He or she can help determine whether a physical or structural problem may be involved and, if so, correct it. Usually, a series of spinal adjustments to return misaligned spinal bones to a more normal position and motion can relieve pressure on irritated nerve roots. A Chiropractor can also help in identifying headache triggers, suggest relaxation exercises, therapy and lifestyle modifications to help avoid future headaches.

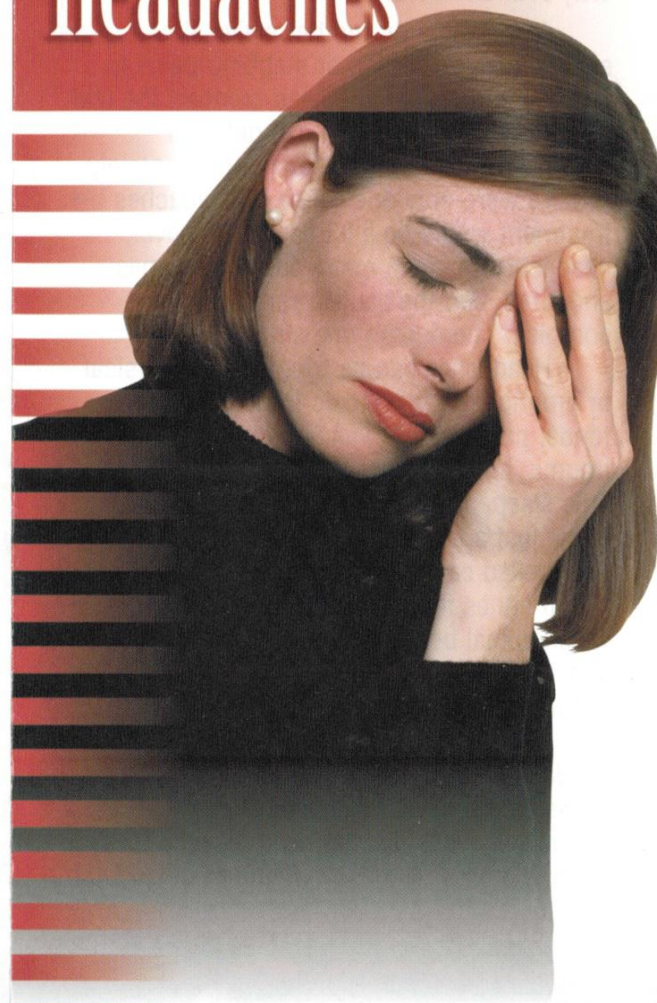
A Safer Approach

Medical management of headaches usually involves medications which are never risk-free. Side effects and even dependencies are common. Chiropractic care offers a safe, natural alternative to relieving and preventing headaches.

What You Can Do

Follow the doctor's recommendations for diet and fitness. Keep a diary of activities, foods eaten, and inhalants over a period of weeks for use in identifying headache triggers. Regularly use the relaxation techniques suggested by the chiropractor, and be patient if seeking help for a long-standing problem.

Headaches



BRAINARD CHIROPRACTIC

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A healthy neck is strong, flexible, and pain-free. It helps support the head and protect the spinal cord. But injury, aging, or repeated stress from poor posture or overuse can damage the neck. Pain often results. Neck muscles can become tight or overstretched. Nearby joints, bones, and nerves can also be affected. Chiropractic can treat stiffness and strain, and joint and nerve problems by aligning the spine. This helps relieve pain and restore movement in your neck.

Your Chiropractic Evaluation

Your chiropractor evaluates you to learn more about your neck problem. Imaging tests, such as an x-ray or MRI, may be done.

Health History

You're asked about your pain, symptoms, past injuries or treatments, and overall health. You're also asked about your daily life, including work, exercise, and diet.

Physical Exam

Your chiropractor examines your neck and checks the alignment of your spine. This helps locate areas of pain, stiffness, muscle spasm, and limited movement. Your posture, muscle strength, flexibility, and reflexes are also checked.

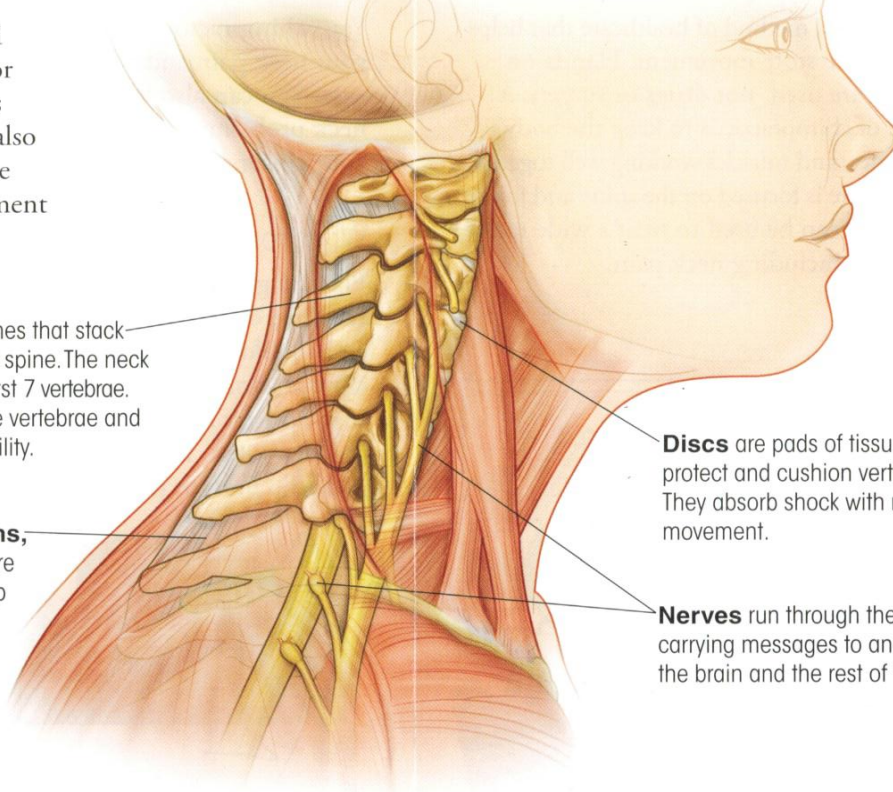
Vertebrae are bones that stack together to form the spine. The neck is made up of the first 7 vertebrae.

Joints connect the vertebrae and give the spine flexibility.

Muscles, tendons, and ligaments are soft tissues that help support the neck.

Discs are pads of tissue that protect and cushion vertebrae. They absorb shock with neck movement.

Nerves run through the neck, carrying messages to and from the brain and the rest of the body.



Your Treatment Plan

Your chiropractor works with you to create a treatment program that meets your needs. This likely includes a hands-on technique called manipulation. Other treatment methods also help. In addition, you're taught ways to protect and care for your neck.

Manipulation

Manipulation (also called adjustment) improves joint flexibility and spinal alignment. During manipulation, your chiropractor carefully applies pressure to affected areas of the spine. Manipulation for neck pain can free up neck movement and help you hold your neck up better.

Other Treatments

The following treatments may also be used to manage your neck problem:

- **Trigger point therapy** to relieve tension and reduce pain in tight muscles.
- **Heat** to relax muscles and **ice** to reduce swelling.
- **Massage, ultrasound, and muscle stimulation** to relax muscles, reduce muscle spasm, and improve blood flow.
- **Stretching and strengthening exercises** to improve muscle strength, flexibility, and range of motion.
- **Traction** to free up joints and improve disc health.



Chiropractic is a method of healthcare that helps ease pain and restore movement. Hands-on techniques are used, not drugs or surgery. A main goal of chiropractic is to keep the body's nerves, bones, and muscles working well together. To do this, care is focused on the spine and joints. Chiropractic can be used to treat a wide range of problems, including neck pain.



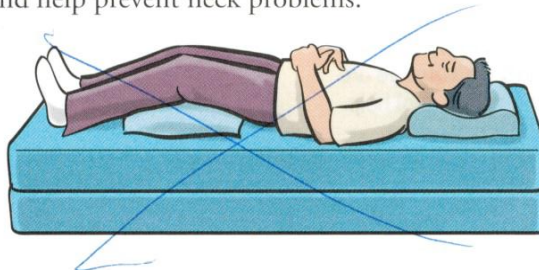
Your Chiropractor

Your Doctor of Chiropractic (chiropractor) has had 6 or more years of education in science and healthcare. He or she can help relieve your neck pain and treat some of the underlying causes of your problem. Your chiropractor can also help you create a plan for a healthier lifestyle. This may include tips on posture, exercise, diet, and stress management.

Your chiropractor can work with you to relieve your neck pain and advise you on proper neck care. You can also learn ways to help prevent neck problems. For best results, follow up with your chiropractor as instructed.

What You Can Do

Practice good posture whether you are sitting, standing, or lying down. This means keeping your ears, shoulders, and hips in line. Talk with your chiropractor about simple exercises you can do to relax your neck. Also, learn techniques to manage stress. This can reduce muscle tension and help prevent neck problems.



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Chiropractic Care for Neck Pain

