

## A Patient's Guide to Headaches & Neck Pain



### **What structures are involved with Headaches?**

Headaches that stem from neck pain are found mostly in individuals who have tightness in the muscles at the back of the neck. These muscles are located at the top of the shoulders and connect at the base of the skull. This tightness is mainly brought about by a forward-head body posture and rounded back, a position commonly taken when seated at the computer or desk. This causes the cervical spine (the top seven vertebrae in the neck) to be positioned into extension. This position causes the neck flexors (the muscles in front of your neck) to lengthen and the muscles in the back of your neck to tighten. This forced position puts a strain on the occipital nerve, which is a sensory and motor nerve that runs through these now-tightened muscles. In many cases, this can cause headaches.

### **Are there different types of Headaches?**

The two most common types of headaches that are concurrent with neck pain are **Tension Headaches** and **Occipital Headaches**. Although there are different causes for both of these types of headaches, most frequently they are caused by a tightness of the muscles at the back of the head and neck. Tension Headaches are the most common type representing almost 90% of all headaches. Tension Headaches are caused by tight muscles in the shoulders and back of the neck. This tightness causes a constant pressure to be put on the muscles and nerves that exit the neck and go into the head. These headaches can be present on both sides of the head and usually start as a constant pressure at the back of the neck and shoulders. Occipital Headaches occur when muscles at the base of the skull, called suboccipital muscles, put pressure on specific nerves. This results in a migraine-type experience with symptoms going up around the back of the ears and into the side of the head or behind the eyes.

### **What causes these Headaches to develop?**

The most common cause for these types of headaches is a combination of poor posture and repetitive motions. The muscles at the back of the head and neck are mainly responsible for maintaining position. For most people who have headaches, these muscles are being over used and asked to perform more work than they are able to do. It is an active process to stand up straight and maintain proper posture. It is often more comfortable to slouch and allow the shoulders to roll forward. Unfortunately this puts an extreme amount of stress on the back of the neck and shoulders. As we put ourselves in these situations over and over again (such as sitting at a desk or typing at the computer) these muscles get tighter, making the headaches more constant.

### **What's the treatment for Headaches and Neck Pain?**

In our office, we use a combination of chiropractic treatments, Active Release Technique (ART) soft tissue manipulation, and rehabilitation to allow restoration of proper biomechanics to the neck and shoulders.

## Ways We Treat Your Headache & Neck Pain:

### **Chiropractic**

- Chiropractic is a natural healing approach that promotes a healthy, pain-free lifestyle without the use of drugs or surgery. An adjustment is a hands-on therapy that delivers a controlled pressure that restores proper motion to a restricted joint.

### **Active Release Technique (ART)**

- ART is a manual therapy that corrects muscular and soft-tissue problems caused by the formation of adhesive or scar tissues. Adhesions/scar tissue occur naturally in the body in response to overuse or cumulative trauma.

### **Flexibility**

- Good flexibility enables muscles and joints to move through their full range of motion. Poor flexibility leads to a higher chance of injury to muscles, tendons and ligaments.

### **Strength**

- Strength training is essential for the rehabilitation of any injury. When new tissue is laid down to repair an area, it is very thin and weak. If this tissue is not properly re-strengthened, it can lead to re-injury.

### **Proprioception**

- Proprioception describes the body's ability to react appropriately to external forces. It also helps rebuild proper motor patterns of the body. Proprioceptive exercises form the basis for the agility, strength, and endurance for complete rehabilitation.



With our combination of different treatments, resolution can be seen in over 90 percent of headache cases. Effective treatment of the neck and shoulders, or any soft tissue injury, requires an alteration in tissue structure to break up the restrictive cross-fiber adhesions and restore normal function to the affected soft tissue areas. When executed properly, this process substantially decreases healing time, treats the root cause of the injury, and improves athletic performance. Active Chiropractic and Rehabilitation Clinic is very successful at treating this type of injury. Our therapies remove restrictive adhesions between both the superficial and deep tissue structures along the entire kinetic chain. This comprehensive approach creates a complete, time efficient healing process.



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