

Will I have HEADACHES forever?

If you have experienced a headache in the last 30 days, you are not alone! Research shows that 57% of males and 76% of females report at least one significant headache per month. Children also suffer with headaches. According to a Swedish study of 9000 children, over 70% experienced headaches by the age of 15.

Headaches are indeed common, but they are far from normal. The effects of these painful events are widespread, from work and sleep disruption to a decrease in overall mood. Migraines alone cost between 5.6 and 17.2 billion dollars per year in lost work and productivity. There are options for headache sufferers!

Headaches can result from physical, chemical or emotional causes. The improper function of the muscles and joints in your neck interferes with the ability of the nerves to communicate with your brain, amplifying pain signals. Car accidents, improper posture and repetitive strain are just a few of the things that can cause these problems.

Mild allergies and reactions to substances that you eat, drink or come into contact with can be chemical causes of headaches. These reactions stimulate pain pathways. Highs and lows in your blood sugar, and dehydration are major culprits.

The last, and one of the most common causes of headaches, are emotional factors. Stress in particular causes us to tense our shoulder and upper back muscles, and this places great strain on the head and neck. The burdens of a difficult day at work or school can also amplify pain signals and initiate headaches.

Although there are several types of headaches, the most common are tension, followed by migraine and cervicogenic. Tension headaches are normally located on both sides of the head and tend to occur toward the end of a stressful day. They are usually of mild to moderate intensity.

Migraines normally occur on one side only, and are characterized by a pulsing sensation of moderate to severe intensity. Migraine headaches may be accompanied by an aura, or a disturbance in vision or hearing that occurs just before the headache appears. Migraines are usually brought on by certain triggers, such as: Red wine, cheese, chocolate, caffeine and processed meat.

Cervicogenic means “originating from the neck”. These headaches are characterized by pain that starts just below the skull that may project to the forehead, eyes or ears. They tend to occur on one side and are often accompanied by a lack of movement in the neck.

If you suffer from headaches, the first thing you should do is try to identify aspects of your life that may be contributing. Ensure that you are drinking eight glasses of water per day. Eat three regular meals and have a piece of fruit between meals to regulate your blood sugar level. Avoid known food triggers one at a time to identify those that affect you. Finally, regulate your sleep schedule and be sure to include regular physical activity in your routine. If you have attempted a lot of these things, and still have headaches, you may wish to consult a professional. A doctor of chiropractic is fully qualified to diagnose different types of headaches, and to treat them appropriately. Chiropractic care for headaches and other conditions is an effective drug free, surgery free approach.

When a chiropractic adjustment is performed, the goal is to correct joint dysfunction in the spine and promote proper muscle and nerve function. A study published in the Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics compared chiropractic treatment to the use of Amitriptyline (a commonly used headache medication) for 150 tension headache sufferers. Results were that people having adjustments experienced a 32% decrease in intensity, a 42% decrease in frequency and a 30% decrease in over the counter medication while there was little improvement and a high prevalence of side effects in the Amitriptyline group.

As a headache sufferer, you do have options. Headaches are routinely treated by chiropractors with a high degree of success. A consultation with a chiropractor would involve a confidential health history and thorough examination. If chiropractic care is appropriate for you, then treatment recommendations will be made.

For more information, please contact Dr. Godin at Cole Harbour Chiropractic at 435-WELL.