

# Headaches And Neck Pain

If you suffer from headaches, you may have been suffering for years. There are different types of headaches, which means that there are different treatment options for each type of headache. It is important that you visit your health care provider to determine what type of headaches you may be experiencing.

One type of headache that is generally undertreated or not diagnosed is a cervicogenic headache. This type of headache is actually caused by the neck. They usually affect one side and spread from the base of the neck to the temple and eye areas of the head. Common symptoms include a steady, non-throbbing pain at the neck or base of the skull, sometimes extending down between the shoulder blades. Because of the location, most of the pain is felt in the head, even though the problem is originating from the spine. Other symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, dizziness, blurred vision, becoming very sensitive to light or sounds and feeling pain down one or both arms. The neck can also become stiff, causing difficulty with neck movement.

A cervicogenic headache generally comes and goes, but then progresses to an almost continuous pain. Of course, any stress to the neck and spine, poor posture, excessive physical activity, and even positioning can trigger the symptoms. Pain usually starts after a sudden neck movement, such as a sneeze. If you already know that you have disc problems in your spine, your risk for Cervicogenic headaches increases. Your provider may order x-rays, a CT or MRI of the cervical spine (neck), and perhaps nerve testing to help diagnose your pain. In some cases, a neurologist may be consulted.

Because headaches can be difficult to diagnose, it is important to keep a headache diary. A headache diary should include 1) Headache severity on a scale from 0-10 (zero being no pain) morning, afternoon, and evening 2) Headache duration 3) Headache symptoms, 4) Medication use, including over-the counter medications, and 5) Triggers which may be causing or aggravating the symptoms (foods, certain activities, etc.). You can share this information with your health care provider, already armed with specific information that will help them with your diagnosis.

Treatment includes stopping "offending" foods or activities, using over-the-counter medication, adding other types of medications, nerve blocks or epidural injections, and even chiropractic. As always, continue or start a healthy diet, get enough sleep, and "de-cluttering" stressors in your life. Visit with your provider to see what options you may have for your specific headache diagnosis.

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