

Cervicogenic Headache

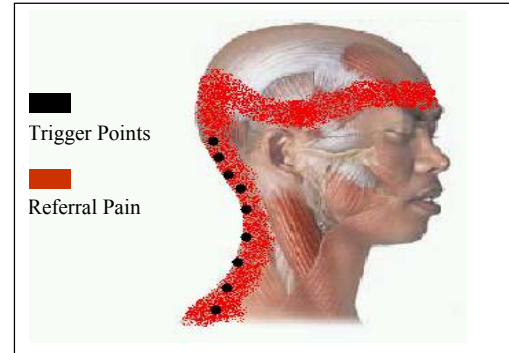
Many people suffer from headaches. The typical diagnosis made by most people is that they have a 'migraine'. Migraines are usually caused by things like hormonal changes, reactions to food, stress, physical exertion and changes in environment. They make up only 8% of all headache episodes. Those that suffer from neck and spine problems, can sometimes make the assumption that they are suffering from a 'migraine', when in fact, what they are experiencing is a Cervicogenic headache.

Uniquely a Cervicogenic headache is where the primary contributing structural source of the headache is the cervical spine. It is a syndrome characterised by chronic pain referred to the head from either bony structures or soft tissues of the neck. The neck is one of the most vulnerable parts of the body; the joints connecting the top two or three levels of the cervical spine to the base of the spine handle 50% of the total motion of the entire head and neck region. This means that the neck and shoulder regions of the body absorb the body's overall tension by bearing the primary load of the head.

Some causes of neck pain can be:

- Whiplash injuries
- Chronic tension
- Intervertebral Disc Disease
- Scoliosis
- Postural misalignment
- Joint degeneration
- Muscular stress
- Progressive facet joint arthritis

There are many muscular trigger points located in the neck, shoulder blades and upper cervical spine that cause pain in the neck and head. Headaches experienced in the forehead or behind, in and around the eyes, are often caused by referred pain in the back of the neck and the base of the skull. The area at the base of the skull is called the suboccipital region as this is below the occipital part of the brain (the smallest of four true lobes in the human brain located in the rearmost part of the skull). This part of the brain is the 'visual processing centre' of the brain, meaning that it is directly connected to the eyes. This explains why people suffering from chronic neck and shoulder tension experience severe headaches in and around their eyes.



Symptoms of a Cervicogenic headaches resemble those of any other headache such as:

- Throbbing pain
- Nausea
- Sensitivity to light and sound

The difference with Cervicogenic headaches is that the pain usually begins in the occipital, neck and shoulder regions and spreads anteriorly toward the front of the head. The nerves running through the upper cervical spine (upper neck) refer pain into the head and neck region. Excessive tension triggers the activation of these nerve pathways causing the headache pain.

For more information on natural ways to treat Cervicogenic headaches, see overleaf.

<http://www.cinn.org/pain/headache-cervicogenic.html>



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Natural vs. Chemical

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is effective for relief of all headaches including migraines, cluster headaches, hormone related headaches, tension caused by stress and muscle tension headaches and of course, cervicogenic headaches.

By finding out exactly why you're getting these headaches and which part of your body they are coming from, our acupuncturists can help relieve headache symptoms and start a treatment program that will help to eliminate them altogether. Treatments will help to relieve tension in the neck, shoulders and occipital region (base of the skull) and can also relieve stress which is one of the main causes of tension.

Pain medication is often used as a 'quick fix' to help relieve symptoms of chronic headaches. It seems to be easier to pop a couple of pills and get on with your day rather than treating the problem. If you are using pain medication often, you will begin to find that your body becomes immune to the medication and it may eventually stop working altogether.

Acupuncture, however, will treat the problem at its source. Each separate set of symptoms will be treated differently as everyone has individual requirements and needs a treatment plan tailored specifically to them.



Remedial Massage

Remedial massage is critical to the successful elimination of cervicogenic headaches. Massage, including relaxation, posture and stretching and strengthening techniques are an excellent therapeutic option to assist in managing chronic pain problems including those associated with head, neck and shoulder pain.

Using trigger point therapy, massage is used to release pressure build-up in those tight areas of the upper body. This relieves tension, relax the body and help you to achieve an all-round sense of good well-being.

What is important to remember is that acupuncture and massage are passive modalities. This means they are gently therapies that although are very beneficial, will not cure you completely overnight. You will definitely feel relief of symptoms after your first treatment, but you will need follow-up maintenance treatments to provide long term benefits. A critical component of any long-term effective pain-management regime is a committed, active participation of the patient. You will begin to understand your own pain trigger warnings and through understanding of stretch and strengthening methods will be able to prevent a chronic headache from occurring.

If you are one of the many people who suffer from cervicogenic headaches, make an appointment with one of our therapists for acupuncture or a remedial massage today so that you can start feeling better—naturally!

Christmas Trading

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our clients for coming to visit us this year. We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a safe and healthy New Year

Our last day of trading for 2007
Friday 21st December
First day back 2008
Wednesday 2nd January

Merry Christmas and see you in the New Year!

Musculoskeletal Therapy in 2008!

From January, Assiram will be introducing a new therapy in addition to Acupuncture and Remedial Massage.

Musculoskeletal therapy will assess and treat the musculoskeletal system using various specialised soft tissue techniques. These include myofascial release, muscle energy, neuromuscular and stretching techniques to prevent and alleviate pain and enhance movement and function.



Aran Bright is one of the first graduates in Australia to complete his Bachelor in Health Science (Musculoskeletal Therapy). He looks forward to offering you this new therapy in 2008.

We will be launching Musculoskeletal therapy in January and will announce this in the January newsletter and on the website. Stay tuned!



Assiram Natural Therapies - 99 Creek St Brisbane 4000

Ph: (07) 3229 0115 Fax: (07) 3229 2145

www.assiram.com.au

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