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## **HEADACHES** **HOW TO LIVE** **WITHOUT THEM!**

**Oh, my aching head!** If you've uttered these words - you're not alone. Headaches are one of the most common physical complaints in the world - millions of people suffer from them. While most headaches are not lifethreatening, they certainly cause pain, suffering and loss of time from work, family, and friends. They're a huge pain in your life! Understanding headaches is the first step to determining what you can do to prevent and treat your headaches.

### **HEADACHES DEFINED**

Most headaches are just that - a headache. This type of headache is called a **primary** headache. An estimated 5% of headaches are warning signals for illnesses or serious physical problems. These headaches are called **secondary** headaches. If you ever have a headache that strikes suddenly, is accompanied by numbness, confusion, slurred speech, or any other unusual symptom, seek emergency care **IMMEDIATELY**.

Primary headaches are generally divided into three categories: tension-type, vascular (including migraines and cluster headaches), and cervicogenic.

**Tension-type headaches** are by far the most common. Typically tension-type headache pain is moderate to severe and is usually generalized all over the head.

**Migraines** are severe, throbbing, often one-sided headaches. These headaches may last several minutes or several days. They often are accompanied by nausea, loss of appetite, and even visual changes called auras. Recent research reveals that migraines may have physical "triggers" such as stress, diet, or medications.

**Cervicogenic headaches** are a musculoskeletal form of tension headaches that may be related to migraines. Neck pain and stiffness accompany these headaches.

### **AVOIDING HEADACHES**

Most primary headaches are caused by stress and tension in the neck and shoulders. We spend more time in front of a computer or sitting at a desk, increasing muscle tension and causing headaches.

- \* Consider keeping a "headache diary." Write down when your headache starts and what happened a few hours prior, including what you ate. You may be able to identify your headache triggers and avoid them!

- \* Be sure to take a break every 30 minutes or so and stretch your neck and shoulders.
- \* Drink plenty of water to avoid becoming dehydrated, which can cause a headache.
- \* Take a short walk or stroll every few hours either outside or around the home or office.

### **CHIROPRACTIC: BETTER THAN DRUGS**

Your first thought when you feel a headache is usually, "How do I get rid of this headache?" Over 4 billion dollars are spent annually on over-the-counter medications for headaches, but many of these are ineffective. These drugs may cause serious side effects and interactions with other medications or supplements you may use. In addition, the drugs that help your headaches today may not give you relief in the future. Some medications have even been shown to cause headaches. Plenty of research has shown the effectiveness of chiropractic care for headaches. Doctors of chiropractic are extensively trained to treat many types of ailments, not just back pain. They know how tension in the spine can cause problems in other areas of the body and they can help you relieve those problems. Break the headache pill cycle by using chiropractic - the drug-free choice!

### **HEADACHE TRIGGERS**

Although the cause of many migraine-type headaches remains uncertain, a wide range of factors can often trigger a migraine, such as:

- \* Hunger or missed meals
- \* Emotions and stress
- \* Some physical activities
- \* Medications
- \* Hormonal changes
- \* Changes in weather
- \* Some foods & beverages that may trigger migraine headaches:

Alcohol - Red wine, vermouth, champagne, beer.

Beverages with caffeine - Coffee, tea, soft drinks.

Dairy Products - Aged cheeses, such as cheddar.

Vegetables and Fruit - Some types of beans (*broad, Italian, lima, lentil, fava, soy*), sauerkraut, peas, avocados, and overripe bananas.

Snacks - Peanuts, peanut butter.

Meats - Salted and cured meats (*ham, corned beef, sausage, bacon, lunch meats*), dried meats, pickled herring, chicken livers.

Soups - Canned or from mixes.

Desserts - Chocolate-based.

Information from the National Headache Foundation  
[www.headaches.org](http://www.headaches.org)