

HEADACHES

Headaches plague 70-80% of all Americans every year. The AMA Committee on Headache Classification has established 15 different types of headaches. By far the most common are muscle contraction and migraine headaches. Less than 2% of headaches have an organic basis of an underlying disease. Most headaches are treatable but it is critical that the symptom not just be covered up with pain-killing drugs. The underlying cause or causes should be found and treated. The following recommendations have helped millions of headache sufferers.

ELIMINATION DIET Allergy and Toxic Headaches

Food or chemical triggers are implicated in between 25-80% of all headaches. This sensitivity may be due to allergy or a biochemical sensitivity.

----- Foods to eliminate. Try one at a time for 1-2 weeks:

Milk and all dairy- cheese, yogurt, ice cream, etc. Chocolate Corn Egg (check labels carefully) Oranges Nuts, Peanuts Wheat Sugar Beef, Pork

----- Chemicals to eliminate for one week:

Aspartame (Nutrisweet)

Caffeine (caffeine withdrawal headaches may make things worse for a couple days)

MSG- Monosodium glutamate (Chinese foods)

HYPOGLYCEMIC HEADACHES

A drop in blood glucose (sugar) levels often trigger headaches.

----- Treatment includes avoiding all sugar, eating every 2-3 hours, and supplementing with B-vitamins and chromium. Regular exercise is also helpful.

MUSCLE CONTRACTION HEADACHES

Tight neck muscles from stress, posture (computer, sewing, cell phone, etc.), poor sleeping position (get off your stomach!), or an improper pillow can be important factors in many headaches. Regular exercise, working and stretching the muscles, and correcting the posture will all be helpful in controlling the symptoms.

CERVICOGENIC HEADACHES

Headaches coming from the cervical spine are very common and chiropractic care is the only really effective treatment for this type of headache. Chiropractic has been shown to be effective in a significant percent of even migraine and other types of headaches.

OTHER TRIGGERS

Hormonal imbalance, stress, lack of sleep, medications, cigarette smoke, environmental factors (light, smells, cold, etc.), eye strain, sinus infections, and teeth and jaw problems, are all factors that can trigger headaches and must be evaluated. Frequent and excessive use of analgesics by long time headache sufferers can perpetuate and worsen head pain rather than relieve it. Studies found that over 50% of headache patients improved after 2 months of no analgesic use.

OTHER STRATEGIES

Headache Supplements- a number of studies have shown several supplements that can reduce the frequency and severity of migraine attacks in certain individuals. These supplements include- 5-hydroxytryptophan, Riboflavin, Butterbur, Feverfew, and Magnesium. Butterbur Extra contains all of these so we recommend trying this supplement at 2x/day for 2 months and evaluating if you benefit.

Exercise- Exercise 30 minutes 3x/week has been shown to reduce frequency and intensity of tension headaches and migraine headaches.

Chiropractic- Several clinical trials, as well as anecdotal evidence, support the use of chiropractic manipulation as an intervention to help tension headaches and reduce migraine headache frequency, duration, nausea and sensitivity to light.

Drink water; apply ice pack to back of neck; rub with Biofreeze or peppermint oil.