



Are Headaches Holding You Hostage?

Oh, no! You can feel it coming on again. Mild as it may be at first, history tells you it is going to get worse before it gets better. Just the thought of it tenses your shoulders and sets your jaw. Another altered day is about to begin. What *won't* you get done today? How bad will the pain get? Will you be able to do anything to change its ugly course? As you ponder these questions, you feel your eyelids lowering to half-mast. For some reason, every time a headache occurs, your entire head and face want to “draw the blinds and close for business”. Headache is unique that way. Unlike back, neck, shoulder or knee pain, it has a “power down” affect on its victims. Voice tone changes, eye brightness dims, facial expressions dampen and attention is directed from the people and tasks before you to the storm swirling through your head. That’s because it seems as though every simple thought or small movement of your head, neck or face intensifies your pain. ¹

If you have been through the medical mill of numerous doctors, tests, and medications—and still you suffer from headaches, I have some wonderful news for you! Your head pain (yes, even your migraines) can become a thing of the past. What’s even better is that my treatment techniques require no medication. In fact, my treatment approach could likely *end* your need for medication all together! The secret to recovery from most headaches and migraines lies in your upper neck. The reason this area is such a headache “hot spot” is due to the fact that the brain is intimately wired to the nerves which exit the spine from the upper portion of the neck and travel up into the head, brain, and face. Therefore problems in the upper neck can easily set-off a headache. Migraines, which are best known to be triggered by food or environmental sensitivities, hormonal changes and/or emotional stress, can often, unknowingly, have an upper neck component, or trigger as well. When this trigger is eliminated, the other triggers can’t “pile high enough” to create a migraine.

For two decades now I have treated head pain patients using hands-on (manual) therapy techniques which address the muscles, joints, and disc located between your third neck bone (cervical vertebrae) and the base of your head. When normal joint movement and disc health are restored, along with muscle tone, texture, and flexibility, a major headache-trigger is eliminated. The beauty of this approach is that it works as well with neck-based/triggered headaches as it does with migraines—even menstrual and ocular (visual, non-pain producing) migraines! The techniques I described above must be administered to you by a properly-skilled, health practitioner. How do you find one? Simply interview your

potential caregiver (physical therapist, chiropractor, or osteopath), asking them if they are specially trained to treat the joints, disc and muscles of the upper neck.*

There is an important role you can play in the recovery from your head pain. The first step is to make sure you have a well-aligned head and neck posture, both when awake and while asleep. If your head is commonly held in a backward-tipped position relative to your upper neck, you are setting the stage for headache trouble by adding increased compressive forces to this highly sensitive area. Here are some examples of risky vs. healthy head-neck posturing for the avoidance of head pain:

Head and Neck Posture for Sitting and Standing

Good...



Bad...



Proper Sleeping Alignment

Back-lying:

Do:



Don't:



Side-lying:

Good Head Position



Head To Low



Head To High



Secondly, you need to make sure you are not putting your head and neck at risk throughout the day. Here are examples of three common, harmful situations and their healthy “fixes”:

On the Phone:



Holding Phone with Your Shoulder



Use a Headset

Tabletop Work:



Head Hanging Down



Work Surface Lifted Up

At the Computer:



Monitor too High



Monitor too Low



Monitor Height Good

The third step you can take to recover from chronic headaches and migraines is to address any untamed emotions, specifically *anger* and *anxiety* which can hold you in an emotional head lock! By seeking help, be it professional, pastoral, or at the feet of the Great Physician himself, you can unlock the chains that are possible preventing your healing.

This is the dawn of a new day for headache and migraine sufferers. Your healing may well be at hand! Don't give up, and certainly don't resign yourself to a lifetime of head pain. I wish you a quick recovery—one without any recurrence. Best of Health to you, my friend!

¹ Excerpted from Lisa Morrone's *Overcoming Headaches and Migraines*, Harvest House Publishers, 2008.

* See Free Resource: "How to Find a Good P.T." (Physical Therapist)