



professional

progressive

physiotherapy

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PhysioPlus Fact Sheet - Headaches

Headaches are often caused by disorders of the neck or physical and emotional tension. Physiotherapists can successfully treat headaches originating from the neck or soft tissues and show you how to prevent the pain recurring.

Is your headache really a neck ache?

For many people, headaches start as pain or tension at the top of the neck. As the pain worsens, it may spread to the back of the head, the temples, forehead or behind the eyes. Moving the neck or bending forward for a long time tends to make it worse.

This happens because the nerves in the upper part of your neck are connected to the nerves in your head and face. A disorder of the upper neck joints or muscles can cause referred pain to your head.

Any of the following points could suggest that your neck may be causing the headache:

- Headache associated with neck pain. Does the pain radiate from the back to the front of your head?
- Headache with dizziness or light-headedness.
- Headache brought on or worsened by neck movement or staying in the same position for a long time.
- Headache which always feels worse on the same side of your head.
- Headache eased by pressure to the base of the skull.
- Headache which persists after your doctor has checked for other causes.

Headaches from other causes.

If migraine, allergic reactions or other factors are likely to be causing or contributing to the headaches, your physiotherapist will recommend that you see a medical practitioner.

How Physiotherapy can help

Physiotherapists are experts in posture and human movement. They will be able to determine if your neck is causing or contributing to the headaches.

Physiotherapists may use:

- Mobilisation
- manipulation
- Functional and rehabilitative exercises
- Encouraging normal activity



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- Postural assessment, correction and advice
- Relaxation therapy
- Laser, ultrasound, electrotherapy and heat treatment
- Massage

Your Physiotherapist can also offer you self-help advice on ways to correct the cause of headaches, such as practical ergonomic tips for work and in the home: adjusting furniture, relaxation and exercise.

The frequent association between headache, facial pain and neck symptoms creates a diagnostic challenge for health practitioners....many people present for treatment with headaches which may be related to dysfunction in the cervical spine (cervicogenic headache) or the temporomandibular joint (temporomandibular headache) or both.