

MIGRAINE RELIEF

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Migraine Relief

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Migraine symptoms and causes

Migraines are moderate to severe headaches with intense pain always repeated on the same area or side. This pain is so intense that it can lead to dizziness, nausea, loss of appetite, difficulty looking at light, noise sensitivity and vomiting. The symptoms of migraine pain can be memorized by the acronym "Pound":

- P-ulsating pain
- O-ne day severe
- U-nilateral
- N-ausea or vomiting
- D-isabling intensity

The causes of migraine headaches can be due to an underlying medical condition, structural issues in the neck and head and/or poor lifestyle choices. Some medical conditions which cause migraine headaches include hormonal imbalances, gastrointestinal problems, heavy metal toxins in the blood, inflammation and insomnia.

Several structural issues in the body can cause migraines such as TMJ (temporomandibular joint) disorders, an injury to the neck and head like whiplash, cervical spondylosis, facet syndrome and/or FHP (forward head posture).

Finally, poor lifestyle choices may lead to chronic migraines because lifestyle choices are often habiting; and habits are repeated daily. If unhealthy habits are being performed every day, then it begins to add up and affects our health. Some examples of poor lifestyle choices are drinking too much alcohol, smoking cigarettes, skipping meals, poor nutrition choices, lack of exercise, stressful reactions, late nights and over-sleeping.

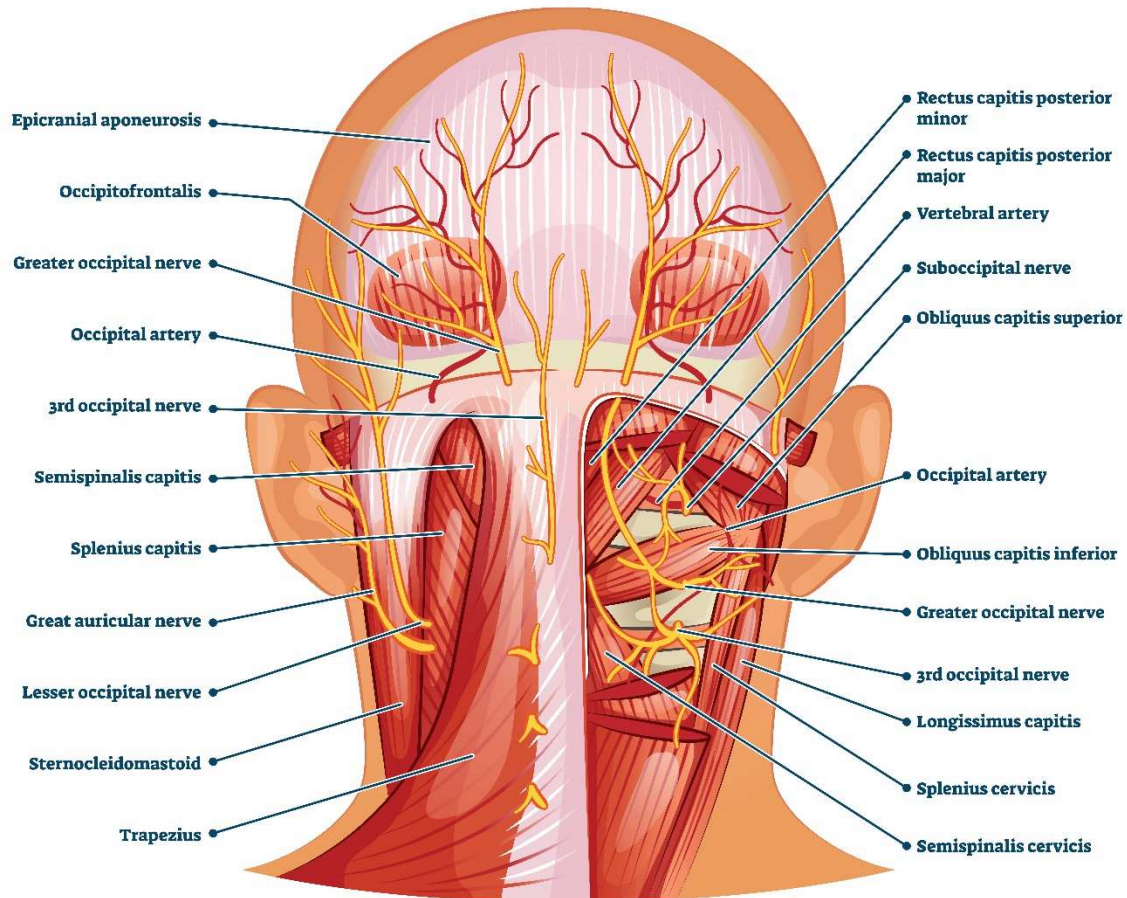
In this documentation, we will look further into the structural imbalances and poor lifestyle choices that cause migraine headaches.

Structural causes of migraines

The reason a migraine can be caused by a structural issue is because there are so many little elements that pass in and around the cervical spine that any instability, rotation or deviation in the vertebrae can put pressure on the nerves and causes the muscles of the neck and head to tense.

The muscles of the neck and head involved in a migraine headache are often (but not limited to): the occipital muscles, the transverso-spinalis group, the rectus group, the splenius capitis and cervicis, the sternocleidomastoid (SCOM) and the trapezius group.

THE BACK OF THE HEAD



As we can see, there is a whole network of tissues and wires in the cervical region. Without going into detail about each muscle's origin and insertion, we can tell that they are all interconnected, therefore a pull or pressure on one side will affect the other and so on.

The different types of structural imbalances discussed here are:

TMJ disorders: The temporomandibular joint is the hinge that connects your jaw to your skull. The muscles of the TMJ help the jaw move up and down like in chewing or yawning. These muscles might tense up due to clenching or stress; when this happens, the temporomandibular joint becomes tight and can lead to clicking or friction during movement. Any friction in the TMJ can be felt in the ear all the way to the sub-occipitals and causes wear and tear over time. Massage techniques to stretch out tight jaw muscles and gentle realignments of the TMJ and cervicals can alleviate a migraine.

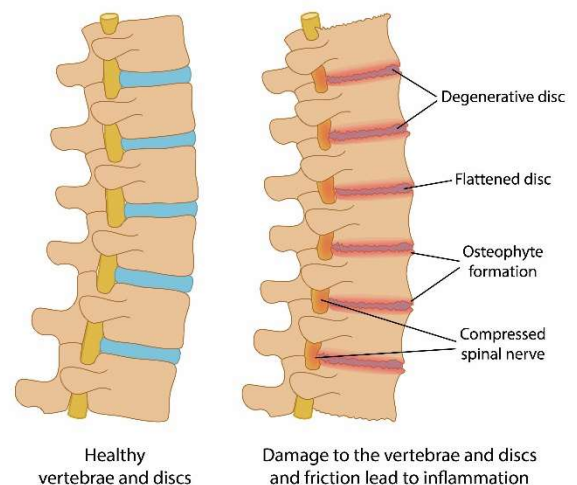


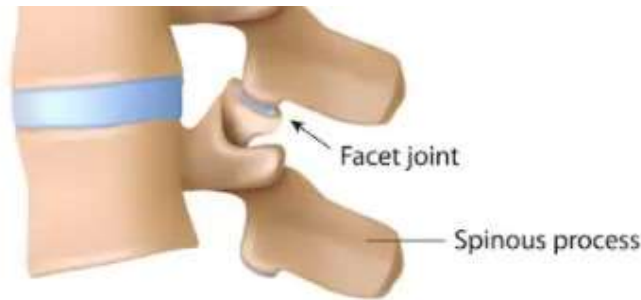
Whiplash: Whiplash in the neck is often due to a traumatic, forced or rapid movement of great amplitude. The pain is sharp and felt immediately, then becomes diffused several hours later when the muscle contraction sets in. In most cases, the blunt of the whiplash will be at the highest point of the curvature in the neck because it was already the weakest level. During the first couple of days after whiplash, the muscular spasms and inflammation limit all movements that stretch the neck. If this continues in the

long-term, the tense neck muscles can start to cause migraines. The best intervention for whiplash would be to reduce the tension as close to the event as possible, with respect to inflammation, so that it decreases the risk of evolving into migraines.

Cervical Spondylosis: It is a type of osteoarthritis often due to age or wear and tear. The complications can be numerous but surprisingly not always symptomatic. If symptoms do occur, they are often described as migraine-like because the friction caused by wear and tear in the cervical spine often leads to what is known as occipital neuralgia, meaning occipital nerve pain, which is the result of pinched nerves.

Osteoarthritis of the spine





Facet Syndrome: Facet syndrome is the irritation of the articular facets of the vertebra often following a bad movement such as a rapid return of the neck. The rapid return impacts the articulation that may or may not pinch the capsule, if it does the impaction is maintained by a muscle spasm. The

pain is sharp and intensified by the movement responsible for the lesion in the first place. In the long run, this type of lesion is detrimental to the articulation's mobility at the vertebral level and it can also tax the adjacent levels, leading to neuralgia and once again causing a migraine.

FHP: Forward Head Posture is often gradual and involves a rounded posture of the upper back, leading to an extension in the neck and an anterior tipping of the vertebral body at the highest peak of the curvature. FHP is a direct consequence of any of the above-mentioned conditions because of the strain that is put on the muscles that are holding up the head. Reoccurrence of migraines are frequent with FHP due to poor posture and weakness or strain in the ligamentous system.



Lifestyle changes for migraine relief

Lifestyle factors that contribute to migraines include late nights, stress, poor nutrition and lack of exercise, to name a few.

What foods should you avoid if you have migraines? Some foods that commonly trigger migraines include:

- Aged cheeses.
- Alcohol, particularly beer and red wine.
- Milk chocolate.
- Cured meats.
- Food preservatives, such as nitrates, nitrites, MSG, and artificial sweeteners.
- Gluten

The most effective ways to get rid of a migraine at home without the use of medication is through lifestyle changes. Developing healthy lifestyle habits can also reduce the frequency and severity of a migraine. Migraine relief should not only be about tackling the problem at-hand

but preventing it all together. Luckily, these can all be turned through one own's effort. Making time to decrease your migraine symptoms is self-care.

Self-care treatments at home for migraines include:

- Healthy eating
- Drinking enough water
- Use an ice pack on your forehead
- Use a heating pad or hot compress to ease tense neck and shoulder muscles
- Dimming the lights
- Practicing relaxation techniques such as yoga or meditation
- Perform the stretches mentioned below

Diet & Hydration for migraines

What foods are good for migraines?



- A wide variety of fruits and vegetables, the more color in your diet, the more vitamins and minerals your body will absorb.
- Bananas, a natural headache reliever because they have potassium, magnesium, B vitamins and complex carbohydrates, all components that contribute to headache relief.
- Complex carbohydrates, such as brown rice, beans and lentils.
- Caffeine, it acts as a corticosteroid opening passages, but only in small amounts because caffeine can dehydrate you and make the migraine worse.
- Dark chocolate, which is chock full of antioxidants making us feel good, and cocoa lowers blood pressure which can lower the amount of pressure felt around the head.
- Ginger, as it is a natural anti-inflammatory, so whether the migraine is due to inflammation or the nerves or the gut, it will help decrease the migraine symptoms.

Finally, make sure to drink plenty of water. If you've been reading my articles or posts you will remember that even the slightest amount of dehydration can lead to fatigue, less circulation, less energy, apathy and poor mood. If you're prone to migraines, then any one of those symptoms can trigger a headache. This can be avoided simply by tracking your water intake. It is recommended to drink the minimum of 8 glasses per day or 1.5 litres in order to ensure proper hydration for your gut, joints, muscles and mind.



Massage therapy for migraines

Can massages help get rid of migraines? Absolutely! Studies have shown that massage therapy reduces not only the frequency of migraines but reduced pain the midst of an active migraine. We know that massage therapy eases muscle tension in the neck, jaw, shoulders and other muscles of the body, so it is no surprise that massages are an effective way to reduce migraine symptoms.

The first objective in a massage would be to relax the musculature involved and release any spasms that may be causing a compression. Unblocking a pinched nerve sends relief to the nervous system, helping the person to relax. The second objective of the massage would be to bring back mobility to the affected level with passive mobilizations and without force, therefore, respecting the tension barriers still present.

Areas to be massaged should include the pectorals, the shoulders, the anterior and posterior cervical spine, the jaw, the sub-occipitals and the scalp. Scalp massage has a wonderful effect for migraines as it desensitizes all the nerve endings in the head, separates the cranial sutures, relaxes the muscles of the eyes and forehead, and of course should include the relaxation of the occipital muscles.

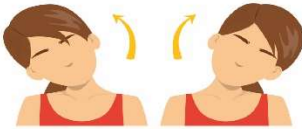


Stretches for migraines

Lastly, it is recommended to stretch the neck and shoulders every day to loosen up tense muscles, to create space in the joints and vertebrae, to increase circulation and to decrease or prevent migraine pain. You can follow this simple sequence below in 2 different ways:

STRETCH FOR NECK AND SHOULDER PAIN

1 SIDE BEND



2 WING SPAN



3 NECK ROTATION



4 SHOULDER SHRUG



5 BACK AND FORWARD BEND



6 NECK ROTATION



7 CAT-COW STRETCH



1. Stretch and hold for 30 seconds on each side: to get a better opening.
2. Perform each movement gently, without stopping, for 1 minute each: to get better mobility.

These stretches and movements are simple, easy to do and can be done pretty much anywhere. Remember to breathe throughout the exercises and don't push your limits; if you feel a resistance hold it there until it releases.

Relief is possible and it all starts with taking the first step. Get moving with these 7 moves and get relief in the next 7 minutes!

To understand more on the anatomy of the cervical spine and the different structural issues that cause migraines, please visit The Body Blog's Anatomy Page on Pinterest:

<https://www.pinterest.ca/TheBodyBlog/anatomy/>.