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**Get back into shape . . .
the chiropractic way**

Back Talk

WITH MARTIN PRESS



Most people who suffer from regular headaches reach for the painkillers, not too many think of seeking help from a chiropractor.

These same people are probably well aware chiropractors treat spinal dysfunction but do not think of headaches and neck pain as being spine-related. Like many of you reading this they think spinal dysfunction means back pain, particularly lower back pain.

The change in our occupations over the years has seen us become less physical and spend more time in front of the computer screen. To this inactivity we can add the increased pace of life in the 21st century. In many ways the cavemen and women had it easy, all they had to worry about were the basics of survival – food, water, shelter. Today we face hundreds of daily stressors many of them quite fundamental like trying to balance the cheque book or deciding what to have for dinner. More and more people are not coping well and experiencing physical tension/stress as a result.

Most stresses in the body are localised in the neck and shoulders. Usually there is an increase in muscular tension which in turn tightens the neck supporting muscles – the muscles holding your head up. As you know when you nod off in the chair your head drops forward. These supporting muscles are always working and sometimes overwork causing an increase in tension in the neck. This in turn tightens up the skull muscles and results in the classical tension headache or cervico-vertebral headache.

By far, most people get tension-type headaches and get them frequently. They typically suffer mild to moderate pain, on one or both sides of the head, often described as tight, stiff and constricting – like having something wrapped around your head and pressing tightly. Pain is often localised behind and above the eyes.

Chiropractic treatment usually involves gentle manipulation of the spine and soft

tissue massage of the supporting muscle structure in the neck and shoulders.

Migraines however are vascular type headaches with sensitivity to light, visual disturbances or auras and throbbing in the head. Often ending in vomiting which may help ease the headache. Chiropractic care generally can't get rid of these permanently but do help ease or even shorten the episode. Many severe headaches are misdiagnosed as migraines but are usually severe or even cluster headaches.

Whiplash injuries, whether caused by a car accident or other sudden movements to the neck can cause headaches due to cervical restrictions or cervico-genic causes effecting the upper cervical nerves and suboccipital nerves causing headaches. Such injuries change the postural position of the neck and headaches can result weeks, months and even years after the injury is sustained. Obviously in such cases chiropractic adjustments are an effective form of treatment.

Many people believe they have always had headaches and this is simply part of their lives. Generally this is not correct; they do not have to put up with it. They should be open minded about their cause and see their chiropractor for a spinal health check. In fact everyone should have a regular check of their spine along with regular GP and dental checkups. After all we put our cars through a complete warrant of fitness twice a year, why not ourselves.

Meantime remember chiropractic adjustments can be as effective and even more effective than medications in reducing the severity and frequency of headaches. Even in cases where headaches may not actually involve stress or muscle tension, the chiropractor's ability to adjust spinal dysfunctions seems to lessen or remove the forces contributing to many individuals' headache pain. ■