

Holding Headaches at Bay

Bodywork Eases Migraines and Tension Headaches

Cathy Ulrich

"Do you get headaches?" I asked Cindy. She had come to see me for massage to address her neck and shoulder pain but hadn't mentioned headaches.

"Well, yes," she said. "I've always had headaches and, now that you mention it, they seem to be worse when my neck hurts." Cindy went on to say she suffered from them as often as 2-3 times a week and typically treated them with ibuprofen.

Like many Americans, Cindy suffers from chronic, frequent headaches. Her neck pain finally prompted her to seek help, but she was so used to the headaches, she thought they were something she simply had to live with.

MIGRAINES.

Migraine headaches occur when the blood vessels in the brain become dilated, usually due to a chemical reaction, such as food allergies or a stress response. They often start with visual disturbances and quickly develop into severe head pain accompanied by nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and sensitivity to light. They're usually felt on one side of the head, but can be on both sides. Migraines are often managed with medications and avoidance of foods known to trigger them, such as red wine, chocolate, aged cheese, and nuts. However, some bodywork techniques can also be effective in easing migraines or decreasing the frequency of these painful headaches.

*Somewhere,
something
incredible is
waiting to be
known.*

-Carl Sagan



Freedom from chronic headaches is an option many Americans don't even realize is possible.

What Cindy didn't understand was that frequent headaches are not normal and, with a little proactive planning, there is something that can be done to manage and even prevent them.

Types of Headaches

Headaches come in many varieties. Following is a short list of the most common types.

TENSION HEADACHES.

Exaggerated by stress, tension headaches are related to poor posture, jaw problems (such as temporomandibular joint disorder, or TMJ), and neck pain. Many people describe a headache that starts at the base of the skull and then moves in an arc over the ears and behind

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the eyes. Tension headaches are most often caused or exacerbated by poor posture, work station positions, and body mechanics, creating undue stress on the upper neck muscles.

MIXED HEADACHES.

The term mixed headache is used to describe a tension headache that leads to a migraine. Typically, the tension headache starts first and the chemicals produced from the pain of it create conditions for a migraine to develop. In people with patterns of mixed headaches, the best way to avoid the onset of a migraine is to treat the tension headache.

Bodywork Options

A treatment regimen that includes bodywork, attention to body position, and stress management can help prevent or greatly reduce the frequency of headaches, in turn reducing your reliance on medication and the need to avoid food triggers. There are many different bodywork techniques, each with specific approaches for treating headaches. Following is a short list of techniques often effective in treating recurring headaches.

SWEDISH MASSAGE.

A tension headache, by its very name, implies the presence of stress and tension. Swedish massage, on the other hand, promotes relaxation and relieves muscle tension. When muscles become tight due to stress or poor posture, they eventually adapt a chronically shortened state. Swedish massage teaches the body how to let go of muscle tension and resets muscle tone.

INTEGRATIVE BODYWORK.

Rolfing, Hellerwork, Structural Integration, and CORE are examples of the types of bodywork designed to improve posture and structural alignment. A primary cause of chronic headaches is poor posture, which produces tension in the neck and shoulders because the weight of the head is not properly balanced on top of the spine. Integrative bodywork can produce lasting postural change for greater ease of movement. By selectively freeing the soft tissues, integrative bodywork literally can change postural alignment and remove the stresses and strains on the muscles that cause headaches.

DEEP TISSUE THERAPIES.

The integrative therapies mentioned above, as well as neuromuscular therapy and myofascial release, use similar techniques to free connective tissue. A chronically tensed muscle tends to maintain that tension, even after the stressful event has passed. Deep tissue techniques free the connective tissue glue, creating a new way for the muscle to function.

REFLEXOLOGY.

Like acupuncture, reflexology works to move energy blockages in the body. By stimulating points on the feet that correspond to organs in the body, reflexologists can promote relaxation, reduce pain, and restore energy flow. Several scientific studies have shown that reflexology is a viable treatment for migraines, in some cases working as well as, or better than, medication--and without the side effects.

CRANIOSACRAL THERAPY.

Craniosacral therapy addresses the inherent, gentle, rhythmic movement of the bones in the skull and their effect on the fluid that surrounds, bathes, and cushions the brain and spinal cord and runs throughout the body. Cranial bones move in miniscule amounts as a response to the production and absorption of cranial fluid. With head trauma, whiplash injury, or even severe stress, cranial bone movement can be compromised, resulting in headaches, dizziness, ringing in the ears, or vision disturbances. This therapy restores the normal movement of the cranial bones and fluid.

By addressing the root of the problem, regularly scheduled bodywork sessions can greatly reduce headaches as well as your need for medication. Remember, headaches are not normal, and you don't have to live with them.



Reflexology has proven as, or more, effective than medication--without the many side effects.

On the Rocks

Stone Massage Provides Tension Relief and Grounding

It's a practice as old as time, but one that has been recently rediscovered. LaStone Massage Therapy, generically known as hot stone massage, is the updated version of a technique employed by Native Americans, using gently warmed rocks to massage the body. The technique provides a deeply relaxing, healing, detoxifying, and, some say, spiritual experience.

Typically, the stones are smooth, black rounds of basalt in varying sizes heated in water to temperatures between 125 and 140 degrees. Warm stones encourage the exchange of blood and lymph and provide soothing heat for deep-tissue work. Cold stones are also used to aide with inflammation, moving blood out of the area, and balancing male/female energies. The alternating heat and cold of thermotherapy brings the entire body into the healing process, with a rapid exchange of blood and oxygen and alternating rise and fall of respiration rate as the body seeks homeostasis.

During treatment hot stones are placed on energy pathways. Some are covered with a towel and positioned to apply steady warmth and pressure along the spine and neck. Others are placed between fingers and toes and on the stomach and forehead -- key spots where energy flow can get blocked. Still others are used almost as an extension of the practitioner's hands to help go deeper into resistant muscle tissue. This requires less effort from the practitioner's own body and delivers healing warmth to the hands, benefitting the therapist, as well as the client.

In addition to the physical effects, hot stone massage is also considered a kind of energy work, calming and energizing the body but with an extra element thrown into the mix to make it more than just a sensory delight. The theory is that incorporating something from nature -- the stones -- adds a symbolic dimension to this therapy, creating a primal connection to the elements for a grounding experience.



Stone massage is both calming and energizing.

Long Live Cells with Vitamin E

Antiaging Inside and Out

A good skin care regimen is comprised of an antioxidant-rich diet and vitamin/mineral supplementation that includes vitamin E -- an essential key to a healthy complexion. Vitamin E is unique in that it's not one vitamin, but a family of eight fat-soluble antioxidants, including four types of tocopherols and four types of tocotrienols -- alpha, beta, gamma, and delta. Alpha-tocopherol is the most common and most potent form of vitamin E.

This important nutrient works to prevent aging by prolonging the useful life of cells in the body. By protecting and strengthening the cell membrane, vitamin E wards off free radical attacks caused by sun exposure and also helps combat disease. This protection is

further intensified when combined with vitamin C. Vitamin E also helps in the formation of red blood cells, protecting them from destructive toxins and cell damage, which also helps prevent skin cancer.

Vitamin E-rich foods include wheat germ; almonds, peanuts, and walnuts; safflower, corn, and soybean oils; and green leafy vegetables. For supplementation, the recommended daily intake of vitamin E is 400 IU. Be aware that high doses of vitamin E (1,200 IU daily or more) can be toxic and cause oxidative damage.

It is imperative that when taking the supplement orally, it is in the natural form, designated with a "d," and not

synthetic, designated as "dl." Mixed tocopherols--meaning a combination of alpha, beta, gamma, and delta--are easily absorbed and a good choice, especially in skin care products.

Topical creams and oils containing vitamin E promote healing, protect cells from free-radical damage, and reduce itchiness--very helpful in treating conditions such as sunburn and eczema.

In addition to contributing to healthy skin, vitamin E has many other beneficial properties, including slowing the progression of Alzheimer's disease, decreasing oxidative stress associated with asthma, alleviating arthritic conditions, decreasing PMS symptoms, and reducing the risk of heart disease.

*Kindness in
words creates
confidence.
Kindness in
thinking creates
profoundness.
Kindness in
giving creates
love.*

-Lao-Tzu

Definition of peace.

There once was a king who sent a request out to his people that someone among them would create a work of art depicting the meaning of peace. There were many pieces submitted that were very beautiful. There were paintings of gardens and pictures of sweet animals and gentle streams and forests, but the picture that the king selected surprised everyone.

It was a painting of a dark and angry stormy sky with flashes of lightening and jagged mountains with a thundering waterfall. Everyone asked the king how he could pick this picture over the beautiful pictures of such serenity. He told them that if they looked closely, they would see on the mountain was a tree with a bird's nest and in the nest calmly sat a mother bird on her young. The king told his people that the true meaning of peace was being calm and content even in the most raging of storms.

Quiet Moments Massage Therapy hopes that in 2008 each of you knows inner peace, even when the storms rage around you.

Quiet Moments

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