



## Are You Experiencing Headaches?



### Physical Therapist's Guide to Headaches

Pain of any type that occurs in any part of the head is called a headache. There are many different types of headaches, with just as many causes. The International Headache Society describes several different categories of headache:

\* Tension-type

\* Migraine and cluster

\* Secondary headaches from an underlying condition, such as fever, infectious disease, sinus disorder, or in rare cases, a tumor or more serious illness

\* Cranial neuralgias, facial pain, and other headaches

Most headaches are harmless and resolve on their own, although severe headaches that recur frequently can affect your ability to do your daily activities and can reduce your quality of life.

There is effective treatment for almost every type of headache. The challenge lies in determining the type of headache, its cause, and in developing an appropriate treatment plan that will reduce both its frequency and intensity. Physical therapists can help determine the type of headache you have and are experts in managing pain from tension-type headaches.

#### What are Headaches?

Headaches, like back pain, are one of the most common of all physical complaints and can be one of the most frustrating to manage. Pain of any type that occurs in any part of the head is called a headache.

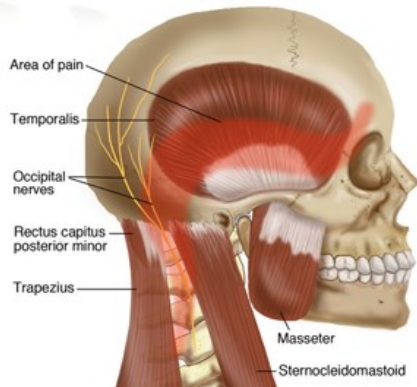
Tension-type headaches (also called muscle-spasm headaches) are the most common types of headaches in adults. They may be the result of a neck or jaw problem, poor posture, fatigue, or stress.

A problem in the neck, head, or jaw--such as an injury or arthritis--can lead to tension in the muscles at the back of the head and to increased pressure on the nerves to the face and head. Poor posture can cause these muscles to become overworked, which can trigger a headache.

#### How Does it Feel?

A tension-type headache typically begins at the back of the head and spreads to the top of the head and the eyes. You might feel an increase in facial pain along the cheeks near the jaw bone (temporomandibular joint dysfunction). People often describe a tightness, a sensation of someone tugging on their hair, or a feeling of wearing a tight cap. These headaches can worsen with specific positions--such as sitting at a desk--and may ease with rest.





### How Can a Physical Therapist Help?

Your physical therapist will conduct a thorough examination that includes a review of your health history. Your therapist will ask you questions and will perform tests to determine the most likely cause of your headaches. For example, your therapist might ask you:

- \* to recall any previous injuries to your neck, head, or jaw
- \* the location, nature, and behavior of your pain and other symptoms

- \* to draw your areas of pain on a body diagram
- \* Perform tests of muscle strength and sensation
- \* Examine your posture when sitting, standing, and performing various activities
- \* Measure the range of motion of your neck, shoulders, and other relevant parts of your body
- \* Use manual therapy to evaluate the mobility of the joints and muscles in your neck

Your physical therapist will work with you to correct the problems that are causing your pain and will help you learn to prevent headaches through simple changes in your posture and lifestyle:

Improve neck mobility. Our physical therapists use a specialized technique called manual therapy to increase movement and relieve pain and to stretch the muscles of the back of the neck.

Improve your strength. Your physical therapist will teach you exercises to increase the strength of the muscles that help stabilize your upper back and neck to improve your posture and endurance and make it easier for you to sit or stand for longer periods of time without discomfort.

Improve your posture. Our physical therapists will teach you ways to improve your posture. Whether it is simply pushing your chest out or pulling your shoulder blades backward and together, slight modifications to everyday living can make a vast improvement in posture.

Modify your workstation or home office. Tips may include:

- \* using a headset instead of a regular phone
- \* adjusting your computer screen so that it is no lower than the level of your eyes
- \* finding an appropriate desk chair
- \* adjusting the position of your computer mouse

**If you are experiencing headaches & would like to schedule an evaluation,  
call Pearson Physical Therapy at 872-5800.**



## ***FREE Stride Clinic***

**Dec. 19, 2013    3-7 p.m.**

We will be holding a *FREE* Stride Clinic on Thursday Dec. 19, 2013 from 3-7 p.m. Please call 872-5800 to reserve a spot. This clinic is for walkers and runners of all ages and skill level.

## Keeping Fit During the Holidays

You're busy , you're stressed , it's chilly out... so why not just take a break from your fitness program until the New Year?

Sure you can always come up with an excuse not to exercise. But slacking off on your fitness program during the holidays will only leave you with more pounds-- and more stress-- come New Year's. Fitness experts recognize that this time of year is difficult for many people trying to stick to an exercise program, so they have some suggestions to keep you motivated and disciplined.

The first thing is to acknowledging the holidays will probably affect your exercise program to some extent. Then you can make adjustments that will help you stay fit during the season. For example, if you usually take exercise classes only offered at a certain time, skip the classes and take a hike or a swim at an indoor pool instead.

Take an honest look at your schedule, and instead of trying to squeeze exercise into your schedule, take other things out. The goal is not to do more (as we all have a tendency to do this time of year), but to do less, but do it well. It is also important to keep fitness a priority in your schedule.

Be flexible when your days get busy. Instead of simply blowing off your 5 pm trip to the gym in favor of an office party at the same time, wake up an hour early and walk or jog before work. Or fit a brisk walk into your lunch break.

To save time, combine exercising and family commitments. For example, hauling the kids up a hill a few times can make a sledding trip as beneficial as a jog. Taking the family snowshoeing, cross country skiing, or on a backpacking trip will provide exercise as well as quality time with loved ones.

*(Information from webmd.com)*



## Christmas Gift Ideas

**Wellness Membership-** A wonderful gift for yourself or a family member- includes the use of equipment during our regular clinic hours- \$50 a year - A GREAT VALUE!

**Kowalzek's Soothing Salves-** These salves are natural products that promote healing and are made from bee's wax and other bee products.

**Ice Packs** - We carry x-large, large and cervical size ice packs. An essential item for post-op, injuries & etc...

**Therapeutica Sleeping Pillows-** Helps prevent & provide relief from neck & back pain. We have 4 sizes available.

**Response Products-** Joint action cream & tablets.

**Advocare Spark-** Energy drink mixes

**All items are available for purchase at Pearson Physical Therapy.**

**Call 308-872-5800 for more information.**

