Burns Bay Physiotherapy

Physio 4 You

AUSTRALIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION
Member

Is your headache really a neck ache?

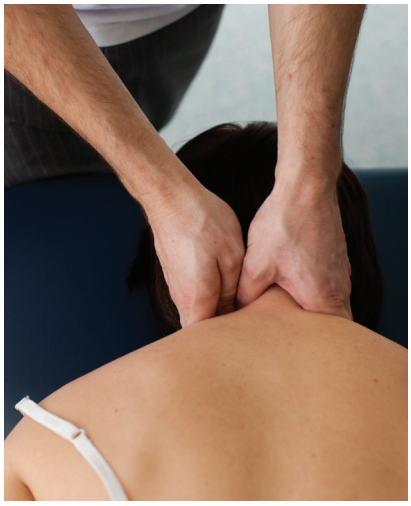
For many people, headaches start as pain or tension at the top of the neck. As the pain worsens, it may spread to the back of the head, the temples, forehead or behind the eyes. Moving the neck or bending forward for a long time tends to make it worse.

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 or muscles can cause referred pain to your head.

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

- 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.

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 your headaches. Physiotherapists may use:

- Mobilisation
- Manipulation
- Functional and rehabilitative exercises
- Encouraging normal activity
- 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, sleeping positions, posture and exercise.

Treatment

Postural neck ache can usually easily be treated with some gentle mobilisation by a physiotherapist and a stretching program to prevent recurrence.

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 from occurring.

You can prevent the onset of your headache by following this advice:

- Sit up properly and arrange your work station to best suit your height and shape.
- Stand up every 15-20 minutes to recover the arch in your spine, both at home and at work.
- Go for a long walk (40 minutes) per day, ideally in one go or split it in two, 20 minutes at lunch and 20 minutes when you finish work.
- Try to stretch regularly through the day.
- Don't drive for greater than one hour without getting out to stretch your legs.
- See your Physiotherapist if you have pain that doesn't settle down in 48 hours.

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Overuse Injuries

What are they?

Overuse injuries refer to specific injuries, which are sustained from repetitive action (e.g. long distance jogging) as opposed to acute injuries, which occur in an instant (e.g. sprained ankle). Another commonly used term for it is 'repetition strain injury' or RSI. Repeated movements or awkward postures result in small injuries; when the injuries happen again and again, the body cannot always keep up with the healing process. Repeated movements cause wear and tear on the muscles, tendons, bones, and nerves of the body. This damage leads to pain, inflammation and loss of function.

Why do they occur?

The principle cause of overuse injuries is a rapid increase in frequency, intensity or duration of a repetitive type action. The condition occurs when any biological tissue - muscle, bone, tendon, ligament, etc. - is stressed beyond its physical limit.

Overuse injuries can happen at work or at play. They often happen in sports when a new sport or activity is started, when an athlete tries to do too much too soon, or when the same movement is repeated over a long period of time.

Physiotherapy can help!

Physiotherapy should be considered as a starting point for anyone who is suffering from overuse injuries / RSI symptoms. Physiotherapists are trained in the complete picture, from the management of the immediate injury, to the return to sport and decreasing the risk of re-injury. This includes help in:

- pain relief
- tissue healing
- exercise prescription and self- management strategies for the injury
- improving flexibility and strength
- identifying and correct biomechanical and training errors
- prevention advice.

If you experience pain, find out why it is occurring. Physiotherapists can help you overcome an injury as quickly as possible.

Contact details

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If you have an injury, don't let it drag on, early assessment and treatment is very important for speedy recovery!

Symptoms of overuse injuries

- Pain
- Muscle weakness
- Numbness
- Swelling
- Restricted mobility of the joint

Common overuse injuries

- tendonitis
- tennis / golfers elbow
- arthritis
- carpal tunnel syndrome
- low back strain
- shin splints

Prevention is the best option!

- Do not over-do one activity, as this places repeated stress on your tissue.
- Rotate your activity so that you give your body time to recover.
- Pain is an indication that you may be damaging your body.

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