

ATTENTION HEADACHE SUFFERERS...

YOUR CHRONIC DAILY HEADACHE MAY BE

RELATED TO YOUR NECK

The headache is one of the most common complaints encountered by physicians. Headache is a complaint in more than half of all physician visits and is the seventh leading complaint at ambulatory medical centers in the United States. Headaches could be chronic and debilitating and may cause young adults to miss work and being unable to function.

Neck could be a hidden source of debilitating headaches, whether from acute whiplash injury or chronic tension in the neck, bulging discs or joint arthritis. Those headaches are called "cervicogenic headache", indicating that the main source of the headache is the cervical spine. Those headaches may be located in the back of the head, however a headache location in the forehead, or behind, in and around the eyes is common due to the "referred" pain pattern.

Cervicogenic headaches are common type of headaches. They are described by patients as severe, pounding, throbbing, stabbing and nauseating. Cervicogenic headaches have been ignored, overlooked or discredited not because they do not occur but because many doctors cannot make the diagnosis. They have not been trained to think of the diagnosis, or in how to make the diagnosis. Even if they do know about the condition they may not have the facilities to diagnose or to treat.

Cervicogenic headaches may interrelate and coexist with other common headache types such as migraine headaches. Migraine may be associated with neck pain, tension, and discomfort. Cervicogenic headaches that may result from acute whiplash injury or chronic neck tension, bulging discs or joint arthritis, may trigger migraine headaches as well.

TMJ and sinus sources are in actuality small fractions of the primary etiologies of headaches. They certainly can be secondary contributors, which set off a smoldering major complex headache. The neck area is a high stress zone and it should be evaluated in detail and treated aggressively in anyone with chronic or recurrent headaches. Even patients with true migraines or cluster headaches will eventually also often end up with compounding cervicogenic headaches.

Why do headache sufferers need to see a headache specialist?

As noted above most headaches are combination of different headache types.

Headache management requires a detailed history and comprehensive neurological evaluation, to address all headache types, which may coexist, and to rule out other serious underlying medical conditions.

Your headache management specialist will discuss your treatment options and determine which option is best for you.

Effectual treatment may combine conservative modalities with medications or /and pain injections. Injections can take the form of muscle trigger point blocks, nerve blocks or epidural spinal injections. The most effective injections for cervicogenic headaches usually end up being x-ray guided facet joint blocks, especially of the upper facet levels. An experienced interventional pain management physician with extensive training should only perform these procedures. Pain injections may not be the first treatment option, but it may be considered if the patient fails to respond to standard conservative modalities. On the other hand pain injections could be started from the very beginning if headaches are very severe and debilitating. The main goal is to maximally relieve pain as quickly as possible. This could be achieved by pain injections and medications

Pain injections could be started from the very beginning as well if the patient cannot tolerate medications, or if the patient is experiencing undesirable side effects from these medications such as confusion, weight gain, drowsiness or stomach pain.

The benefits of injections versus the risks of other headache treatments and disability should always be considered. Pain injections are covered by insurance companies.

Other interventional procedures that could be considered in chronic daily headache management include and not limited to Botox injection and peripheral nerve stimulation

With all the great advances in headache management, there is no reason to let your headache control your life. Coping with the debilitating headaches or the side effects of too many medications is not supposed to be part of your life. Take the first step to be in charge of your life by conquering your headaches.

Dr N. Suwan, is board certified in Neurology, and board certified in Pain medicine with extra certification in Headache Medicine, who specializes in treatment of headaches and migraines, and director of Advanced Headache Clinic.

Central scheduling 630.245.1010.

By Dr. Nesreen Suwan, MD,
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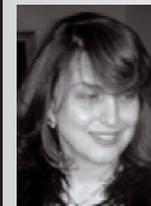


Attention
Headache
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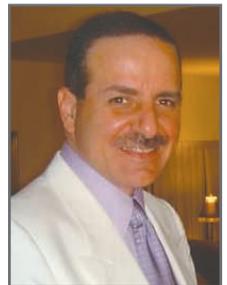


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