

Physical Therapy News

From your friends at Northshore FYZICAL Therapy & Balance Centers

Everything You (Did Not) Know About Headaches



The common response to a headache is “Let me pop a painkiller and hope the pain goes away”. While this is not necessarily a bad idea, it’s not a long-term solution for headaches, particularly the ones that have a musculoskeletal origin.

Most patients are unaware that physical therapy can play an important role in the treatment of headache. Did you know that a physical therapist can evaluate symptoms and create a plan to reduce headache by restoring

muscle balance? With certain types of headaches, this has the potential to reduce or even eliminate the need for medication. For example, did you know that strengthening of the muscles surrounding the neck and jaw helps in the treatment of headache? It’s true; physical therapy can restore balance and relieve strain on muscles and joints in the head and neck region.

After a complete evaluation, the physical therapist may decide to use manual therapy, which includes joint mobilizations and massage, to provide welcome relief to overworked tissues. The result is relief from the pain of headache and a smile on your face.

A migraine is a severe headache that may require medical attention. It is a disorder of the central nervous system involving blood vessels and nerves, resulting in intense pain. Once the cause of the migraine has been identified and treated by a physician, a physical therapist can facilitate a quick recovery to help the patient resume a normal, healthy life.

Pain Relief at the Source

One of the objectives of physical therapy intervention is adjustment of soft tissues and correction of mechanical dysfunction associated with the headache. There are several ways that a physical therapist can help achieve this. If sensitive tissues (blood vessels, nerves) in the neck are compressed, the physical therapist can use mechanical or manual traction procedures to



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facilitate decompression, improve circulation and relieve pressure around the affected tissues.

The prescription of a home exercise program to improve posture and movement patterns can be another part of the treatment process. Unknown to most patients, poor posture contributes to head and neck pain.

Depending on the severity of your headache, physical therapy can be a valuable adjunct to medications prescribed by a physician. While medications help control the pain of headache, a regimen of physical therapy improves the body's inherent ability to fight factors that trigger headaches.

Physical Therapy and Referred Pain

One of the causes of headache is referred pain (from other parts of the body). When the muscles and joints in the upper back, neck and shoulder are under stress, they become inflamed and cause pain. Due to the complex and interconnected network of nerves and blood vessels in the upper body, this pain often spreads upward, triggering a headache or a debilitating migraine.



This is exactly where a physical therapist can help. With a precise combination of exercises, manual therapy and relaxation techniques, the therapist can facilitate pain relief. If you've been suffering from headaches, a viable, drug free option is available to you. You don't have to live with pain any longer because physical therapy is a viable, scientific treatment option. Just call us and we will get you started. We will do everything we can to put that smile back on your face.

