

What are Headaches?

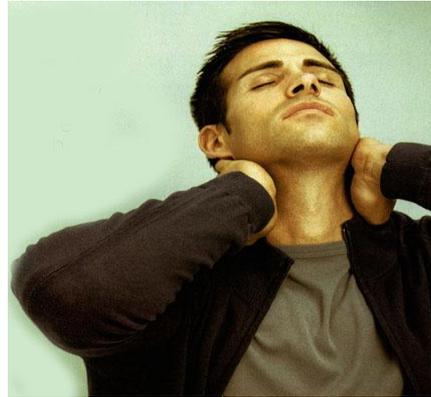


Headaches are defined as pain in the head or upper neck.

- one of the most common locations of pain in the body
- one of the most common reasons why people go to the doctor.
- 7 in 10 people have at least 1 headache a year
- 45 million Americans suffer from chronic headaches.

Primary headaches (over 90% of headache pain) include migraine, tension, and cluster.

Tension Headaches



- most common type of primary headache
- affects as many as 90% of adults
- typically feels like a tightening on both sides of the head
- lasts for minutes or days and happens frequently
- often the result of stress or bad posture, which causes tightening of the muscles in the neck and the scalp
- often worsens with noise and hot, stuffy environments
- occurs mostly in women over age 20

Migraine Headaches

- the 2nd most common type of primary headache
- estimated 25 million people in the US (about 12% of the population) will experience 1 each year
- before puberty, boys and girls are affected equally
- after puberty, more women than men are affected
- are intense and throbbing, often involve one side of the head, and can cause sensitivity to light or noise
- last from hours up to 3 days
- some have an "aura" (a group of visual symptoms) just before onset



- recur at intervals of varying length from several times a month to less than 1 a year
- attacks usually are less frequent and less severe as they get older

Cluster Headaches



- the 3rd most common type of primary headache
- affect about 1 million people in the US
- are non-throbbing and usually are felt on one side of the head behind an eye
- occur between 1 and 4 times a day lasting for 30 to 45 minutes over several days
- more common in men
- likely to be related to an increased blood flow as a result of the blood vessels in the brain widening

Complications

- **Abdominal problems.** Certain pain relievers called non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, others), may cause abdominal pain, bleeding, ulcers and other complications, especially if taken in large doses or for a long period of time.
- **Medication-overuse headaches (MOH).** If you take over-the-counter or prescription headache medications more than 10 days a month for three months, or in high doses, you may be setting yourself up for a serious complication known as MOH. MOH occur when medications not only stop relieving pain but also cause headaches. You then use more pain medication, which continues the cycle.
- **Serotonin syndrome.** Serotonin syndrome is a rare, potentially life-threatening condition that occurs when your body has too much serotonin, which is a chemical found in your nervous system. It may occur if you take migraine medications called triptans and antidepressants known as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) or serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs).
- **Migrainous infarction.** Some people who have a migraine with aura may have aura symptoms that last longer than one hour. This can be a sign of bleeding in the brain (stroke). If you have a migraine with aura, and your aura symptoms last longer than one hour, you should have it evaluated.

How Massage May Help...

- decrease muscle tension
- decrease pain
- decreases stress
- decreases frequency of headaches
- improve sleep patterns
- improve range of head and neck movement



Sources

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- *The Chronic Pain Solution: Your Personal Path to Pain Relief* , by James N. Dillard
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