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Chiropractic TMJ & Headaches

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Introduction

Two of the most common conditions involving the head that chiropractors are recruited to treat are: TMJ syndrome and headaches.

The TMJ is where the jaw bone connects to the head. It is also called the temporomandibular joint. Since it is a moveable, functional structure, any misalignment or restriction in this joint can cause pain in and around the jaw, ear or head. Causes of TMJ pain may include: poor alignment of the teeth, grinding or clenching the jaw while sleeping, excessive gum-chewing, etc.

Chiropractors know how the TMJ is supposed to function. After assessing your jaw for dysfunction, your chiropractor may apply chiropractic adjustments to the TMJ in order to restore proper function. Whenever you feel your jaw clicking or popping, or have pain on opening or closing your mouth, call on your chiropractor to help. Research has shown how effective chiropractic can be to solve this problem.[1]

Another common condition affecting the head is the collection of symptoms referred to as "headaches": including migraines, tension-type headaches, cervicogenic headaches, cluster headaches and so on.

Since irritation of the brain itself does not result in pain (open-brain surgery has proven this to be true), "aching" in the head can only be caused by the irritation of a number of other pain-sensitive tissues. Muscles, nerves, joints or ligaments are all examples of potential sources for head pain.

Muscles:

The most common type of headache is the tension-type headache. It

QUESTION?

TMJ refers to the bones connecting the..... ?

A) head and neck
B) head and jaw
C) head and sinus cavity

Answer:
B) the head and jaw

TRUE OR FALSE?

A cervicogenic headache originates from the TMJoint

Answer:
False – from a dysfunctional neck joint

QUESTION?

What percentage of headaches is tension-type?

A) 50%
B) 75%
C) 90%

Answer:
C) 90%

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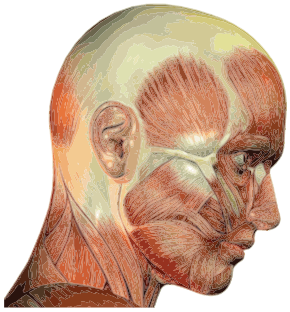
represents approximately 90% of all headaches and is described as a generalized tightness and 'achiness' around the head. The cause of tension-type headaches is thought to be tightness in the muscles of the neck and scalp. There are a number of contributing factors, including mental stress, postural stress, lack of sleep, etc. Chiropractic adjustments are very helpful in reducing the frequency and intensity of tension-type headaches, because joints that move easier and have better alignment significantly reduce the stress and strain on the surrounding muscles.

Nerves:

The scalp is innervated primarily by the occipital nerves, originating in the upper cervical spine. Whenever these nerves are irritated, the tissues that are connected to these nerves can feel like they are being irritated also. Thus, it is common to feel headaches when subluxations are present between the first and second cervical vertebrae. If your head is aching at the base of your skull, and/or the pain is traveling around to your temples, then your pain is likely being caused by an irritation of the occipital nerves. If you are prone to these types of headaches, be sure to have your chiropractor assess your neck. Often one or two adjustments are all that you need to take the pressure off these nerves.



Joints:

When joints become dysfunctional, all other tissues can be negatively affected, often leading to painful symptoms. Headaches that originate from dysfunctional joints in the neck are called cervicogenic headaches. When the normal freedom of movement is restored in these joints with chiropractic adjustments, headache intensity, duration, and the need for medication are all significantly reduced.[2]

Thankfully, there is a study that finally shows how vertebral subluxations really are a pain in the neck (and head):

In this recently published study[3], a researcher recruited a sample of students between the ages of 10 to 13 years old. The sample was divided into two groups: one con taining children who experienced recurring neck pain and/or headaches (40% of all the students surveyed), and the other group with an absence of these recurring symptoms. Then, a physical examination was performed on each child, specifically analyzing postural alignment, range of motion of the cervical spine, muscle tone and function, plus passive motion of the individual neck vertebrae.

The results amazed even the researcher: of all the data collected from the physical examinations, the only factor that could be correlated to the students' pain was the presence or absence of cervical subluxations!

So, if you have any symptoms that resemble TMJ pain or headaches, remember to consult with your chiropractor first.

Quote to Inspire

"Usually the biggest demon is not out there. It's what's inside your head"

Rick Hansen

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