

Tension Headaches

Headaches originating from muscles and joints in the neck and shoulders are the most common forms of primary headache. These headaches are usually caused by poor work-related posture, stress, and neck injuries such as whiplash.

Tension:
pain is
like a band
squeezing
the head

Tension-type headaches are the most prevalent type of headache that is found in approximately 35% of the general population. This means that around 7 million Australians are likely to have these headaches at any time point. Most tension-type headaches can be episodic or constant over time and start during teenage years and peaks in the 4th decade.



Causes

-Stress & Anxiety

People prone to tension headaches are often prone to the effects of stress as well as depression and anxiety. A major effect of these factors cause muscle tension in the neck and shoulders that have attachments on and around the skull. Additionally, stress and anxiety also contributes to reductions in pain thresholds, making it more likely that a headache will occur in situations otherwise considered normal.

-Poor/uncomfortable work posture and/or sustained reading in association with bright lights

Work stations even when set up correctly can cause headaches. The factor most relevant to headaches in these cases is monitor position that should be at least 60cm away from you and slightly below eye level.



-Eyesight

Eyesight can deteriorate without knowing and can sneak up on anyone and is increasingly common as aging people use computers. Even if you have prescription glasses, it may be time to get re-assessed. Furthermore, wearing bifocals demands titling of the head backwards, this then causes contraction of the neck muscles that

attach to the back of the skull.

-Irregular meal times

Busy schedules interfere with meal patterns. Hunger causes muscles in the neck to tighten, triggering a headache. Missing or delaying meals also causes a drop in blood sugar levels, which leads to the body releasing hormones to counter low glucose levels which than also trigger headaches.

Symptoms

- ✓ Dull persistent pain on both sides of the head and neck (may be more prominent on 1 side)
- ✓ Constant tightness and pressure sensations around the head
- ✓ Associated ache in the shoulder muscles
- ✓ Frequent and episodic that is mostly associated with stress
- ✓ Reduced ability to concentrate
- ✓ Difficulty sleeping
- ✓ Associated anxiety

How Can Physiotherapy Help Someone With Headaches

The aim of Physiotherapy treatment is to improve joint mobility and reduce muscle tension in the neck, shoulders and upper back with soft tissue massage and mobilisation to loosen the joints. This treatment relieves the build-up of muscle tension that may lead to headaches. Overall, the aim is to improve the blood supply to and from the head and neck and how to prevent further headaches with advice on repetitive postures and exercise.

