

CHRONIC HEADACHE

It's Not All in Your Head. You Have A Choice!

ARTICLE SELECTIONS

- INTRODUCTION
- WHAT IS CHRONIC HEADACHE
- CAUSES AND SYMPTOMS
- WHO IS AT RISK
- TRADITIONAL TREATMENTS
- WHY TRY PHYSICAL THERAPY FIRST
- PATIENT COMMENTS
- DOCTOR'S COMMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Most people experience headaches from time to time. However for about 4 to 5 percent of adults, headaches occur nearly every day. These are referred to as chronic headaches. An estimated 45 million Americans experience chronic headaches.

WHAT IS CHRONIC HEADACHE

Chronic headaches are headaches that are recurring nearly on a daily basis. They can be the result of a complication or they could be the symptom of some underlying issue. For at least half of these people, the problem is severe and sometimes disabling. The incessant nature of these chronic daily headaches makes them among the most disabling headaches.

CAUSES AND SYMPTOMS

Doctors classify chronic daily headaches as either primary or secondary. Primary chronic daily headaches often develop in people who've had migraine or tension-type headaches for many years. Over time, these headaches gradually increase in frequency until they appear almost daily. Secondary chronic daily headaches are caused by an underlying disease or condition.

The causes of chronic daily headaches are not well understood. There are many possible factors for primary chronic daily headaches:

- Medication overuse
- Abnormal response of the brain to stimulation, such as muscle strain, tension or tissue inflammation
- Abnormal function of brain structures that suppress pain
- Changes in the nervous system due to frequent headaches
- Stimulation of the central nervous system due to stress, infection or trauma
- Genetic predisposition to increased pain sensitivity
- Injury to or painful stimulation of the upper spine

Secondary chronic daily headaches may be caused by various underlying diseases or conditions, including:

- Inflammation of the arteries or the blood vessels.
- A new, abnormal formation of tissue (neoplasm)
- Infection
- Sleep disorders (such as obstructive sleep apnea)

WHO IS AT RISK

Chronic daily headaches are more common in women than in men. Various factors may increase the risk of developing chronic daily headaches, including:

- Anxiety, Depression
- Obesity
- Sleep disturbances, Snoring
- Overuse of caffeine
- Overuse of pain medication (on average, more than 2 days a week or 9 days a month)

TRADITIONAL TREATMENTS

Traditional treatments usually begin with ruling out any underlying diseases or conditions. When no diseases or conditions are present, treatment then focuses on external/environmental factors that might be the culprit of these headaches. Prevention therapy may be recommended, but this form of therapy involves prescription drugs and possibly injections.

Unfortunately, some chronic daily headaches remain resistant to medications and there are some serious side effects associated with these medications.

WHY TRY PHYSICAL THERAPY FIRST

Physical Therapy addresses the musculoskeletal aspects of chronic pain problems. As one sufferer stated “With no success with doctors in relieving my chronic headaches and having been actually harmed by some of the drugs that they prescribed, I did what about 90% of chronic pain sufferers do, and sought help with alternative treatments.”

PATIENT COMMENTS

DOCTOR’S COMMENTS

References: Sources come from one or more of the following articles and sites:
Medicinenet.com / mediregister.com / mediline.net / mediinfo.co.uk / mhni.com / Mayo
 Foundation for Medical Education and Research. / American Academy of
 Otolaryngology?Head and Neck Surgery
 / Medline plus.org