

## **“Oh My Pounding Headache”**

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There's no shortage of things that give me a headache these days, long days, lack of sleep, hunger, bad music, the stock market, bad conversation.....the list goes on and on. Don't get me wrong, I'm sure I've given people more than my fair share of headaches, but there's no doubt that stressful situations can often lead to blinding headaches. In fact, 30-80% of people in the US report to have occasional headaches, otherwise known as Tension Headaches.

Tension headaches are typically caused by muscle tightening in the back of the head, neck and shoulders. Women are twice as likely to suffer from them as men, whom my wife would argue, are because of men.....but that's a whole other discussion. There are 2 types of classifications: Episodic tension headaches which occur randomly and infrequently and Chronic tension headaches, typically more than 15 days per month.

Headaches may vary in intensity and duration, symptoms are commonly: tight muscles, a vice-like sensation around the head, pounding feeling in the forehead, temples or the back of the head. Severe/chronic headaches can also alter sleep patterns, cause insomnia, irritability, fatigue, and decreased concentration.

The cause of tension headaches is not fully understood by scientist, but common triggers are thought to be:

- Stress
- Poor Posture
- Neck or shoulder tightness or injury
- Anxiety/Depression
- Fatigue

Perhaps, one of the most overlooked causes of tension headache is due to nerve irritation in the upper neck caused by poor functioning spinal joints, referred to as Vertebral Dysfunction. Since the nerves of the upper neck supply areas of the scalp and face, irritation to these nerves can, and often does lead to headaches and muscle tightness in those areas.

Physical Therapy is an extremely effective treatment for tension headaches. After a careful analysis of potential headache triggers your physical therapist will perform a detailed history, and spinal examination to determine the cause of your headache. Further diagnostic testing such as x-ray or MRI may also be required. Ultimately, by carefully restoring proper movement to the spinal joints of the neck your physical therapist should be able to significantly reduce the presence of nerve irritation and muscle tension, restoring the proper movements, of neck and spine.

Please visit us at [www.trinity-rehab.com](http://www.trinity-rehab.com) for more info on Physical Therapy. Or call us at any one of our 5 locations at 732 219-5700 for a free full body screening.