

Your 21-Step Guide to
**ELIMINATE
HEADACHES**

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Identifying and Addressing Headaches

Sensitivity to light, nausea and dizziness, and persistent throbbing.

These are just a few unpleasant symptoms that approximately 50% of adults worldwide face.

Untreated headaches can significantly impact our day and make even the simplest tasks challenging. Going to work, looking after kids, or even turning the bathroom light on can be impossible.

You've likely tried over-the-counter medications to eliminate the pain, only to find the headache returns once the medication wears off - and it doesn't offer a long-term solution to your headaches.

The good news is there are ways to identify and address your headaches.

At **Liverpool Chiropractic Clinic**, our core philosophy is treating the root cause to ensure a holistic approach to your health that offers a long-term solution for your future.

As a part of our duty of care, our team has collated their expertise to create this comprehensive guide to headaches to help you find peace and improve your quality of life.

7 Common Types of Headaches

#1 Tension Headaches

Often described as a dull ache or pressure that feels like a band around the head. They can be caused by:

- Stress
- Poor posture
- Muscle tension in the neck and shoulders

#2 Migraine Headaches

Characterised by intense, throbbing pain on one or both sides of the head, migraines affect approximately 10% of the global population and are often accompanied by other symptoms, such as:

- Sensitivity to light and sound
- Nausea and vomiting
- Visual disturbances (aura's)
- Pulsating or throbbing sensation

#3 Cluster Headaches

These are rare but very painful headaches that occur in cyclical patterns, often several times a day for weeks or months.

They typically affect one side of the head and are often accompanied by tearing and redness of the eye.



#4 Sinus Headaches

Sinus headaches are caused by inflammation of the sinuses and are often accompanied by:

- Congestion
- Facial pressure
- A stuffy or runny nose

#5 Hormone Headaches

These are often associated with changes in estrogen levels, such as:

- During menstruation
- Pregnancy
- Menopause

Other symptoms, such as mood changes and fatigue, can accompany them.

#6 Post-Coital Headaches

Also known as "sex headaches", post-coital headaches occur during or after sexual activity.

In some cases, post-coital headaches may be a symptom of an underlying condition, such as a brain aneurysm or an underlying vascular disorder.

If you experience frequent post-coital headaches or headaches during sexual activity, it's essential to speak with a healthcare professional to rule out any underlying conditions and to determine the best course of treatment for your individual needs.

#7 Cervicogenic Headaches

Cervicogenic headaches originate from the cervical spine (neck) and are caused by dysfunction of spinal joints, and irritation of spinal nerves or surrounding structures.

These headaches can be felt in the head, face, or behind the eyes and are often described as a dull, aching pain that can be unilateral (on one side) or bilateral (on both sides).

Cervicogenic headaches can stem from various factors, such as musculoskeletal issues, structural abnormalities, and nerve-related problems within the cervical spine.

Common triggers include:

- Poor posture
- Neck injuries such as whiplash
- Degenerative changes in the cervical vertebrae
- Muscle imbalances



Migraine



Tension



Sinus



TMJ



Cluster



Neck



Tension

Tension and strain in the muscles and ligaments of the neck, as well as disorders such as cervical spondylosis or herniated discs, can contribute to cervicogenic headaches.

Inflammation

Inflammation or irritation of the cervical nerves can also lead to pain that is felt in the head.

Stress

Stress and prolonged periods of sitting, especially with poor ergonomics, can worsen cervicogenic headaches.

Recognising these underlying factors can help effectively manage and treat these headaches.



Your 21-Step Checklist to Eliminate Headaches

- Keep a Headache Diary
- See Healthcare Professional
- Check Blood Pressure
- Get Your Eyes Checked
- Check Your Medication
- Have Your Teeth Checked
- Monitor Your Hormonal Health
- Stay Hydrated
- Limit Caffeine
- Maintain a Regular Meal Schedule
- Get Enough Sleep
- Reduce Blue Light Exposure
- Assess Your Posture
- Optimise Your Office Set-Up
- Improve Sleeping Posture
- Adopt Relaxation Techniques
- Integrate Nutrients & Supplements
- Practise Breathwork
- Exercise Regularly
- Identify Food Intolerances
- Elimination Diet

#1 Keep a Headache Diary

A diary will help you identify potential triggers and patterns contributing to your headaches and track the effectiveness of treatments you use.

This can be extremely helpful to your healthcare provider to support you in your next steps to eliminate headaches.

How to Keep a Headache Diary:



Date and Time:

- Record headache start and end times.



Headache Description:

- Note location, pain type (e.g., throbbing), and intensity (1-10 scale).



Identify Triggers:

- Document potential triggers such as food, stress, lack of sleep, or weather changes.



Medication Log:

- Record medication details (name, dosage) and assess effectiveness (1-10 scale).



Symptom Tracking:

- Note accompanying symptoms like nausea, dizziness, and sensitivity to light or sound.



Routine Changes:

- Document diet, sleep, exercise, or travel changes.

Foods

Document specific items consumed before headaches, including time and duration since consumption. Common culprits include caffeine, alcohol, chocolate, and processed meats.

Stress

Note stressful events preceding headaches, detailing duration, intensity, and coping strategies. Stressors may involve work, relationships, finances, or major life changes.

Lack of Sleep

Record the amount and quality of sleep you get before a headache. Note the duration of sleep, as well as any interruptions or disturbances.

Weather Changes

Record the duration and severity of weather changes, as well as any steps you take to manage the headache, such as using temperature-controlled environments or taking medications.

Consider a broader timeline for each factor by examining the 48 hours or the week leading up to headaches.

This involves evaluating sleep patterns, work hours, and other lifestyle factors.

#2 See a Healthcare Professional

Your headache diary will support your health professional in addressing your headaches and finding a solution that works for you.

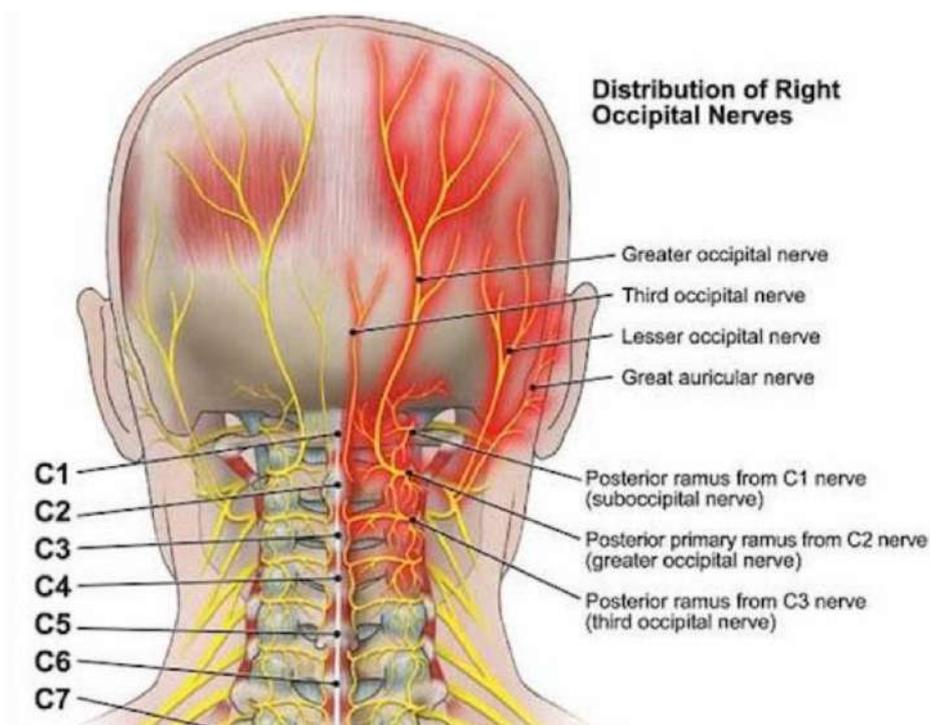
See a healthcare professional such as a Chiropractor, Osteopath or Physiotherapist.

They can help diagnose your type of headache and address it using chiropractic adjustments, massage, and acupuncture, which can all help with the frequency and intensity of your headaches.

The upper cervical joints and nerves play a crucial role in the manifestation of head pain, often characterised by specific cervical nerve radiation patterns. These joints are responsible for supporting and facilitating the movement of the head.

When these joints become dysfunctional due to misalignment, inflammation, or injury, they can irritate or compress cervical nerves, resulting in potential headaches.

Cervical nerve radiation patterns typically cause pain in the forehead, temples, or back of the head. In addition, trigger points in the surrounding musculature can also cause pain in the head or headaches.



A healthcare professional can help identify trigger points. The following muscles are common areas that can cause headaches when under tension.

Suboccipital Muscles

- Tension in the suboccipital muscles can lead to stiffness and discomfort, potentially contributing to tension headaches.
- The close proximity to the upper cervical spine makes these muscles a focus for some chiropractic and manual therapy approaches to alleviate tension and improve mobility.

Trapezius Muscle

- This muscle extends from the base of the skull down to the mid-back and laterally to the shoulders.
- Factors such as poor posture, stress, or repetitive movements can lead to trapezius muscle tightness.

Sternocleidomastoid Muscle

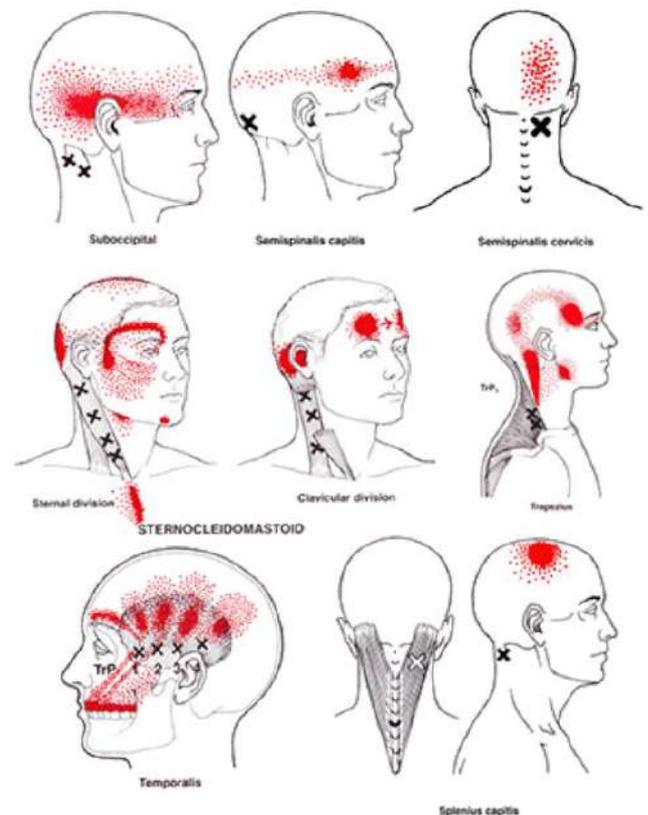
- This muscle runs along the sides of the neck and is responsible for turning and tilting the head.
- Poor neck posture, stress, or strain can lead to tension in this muscle.

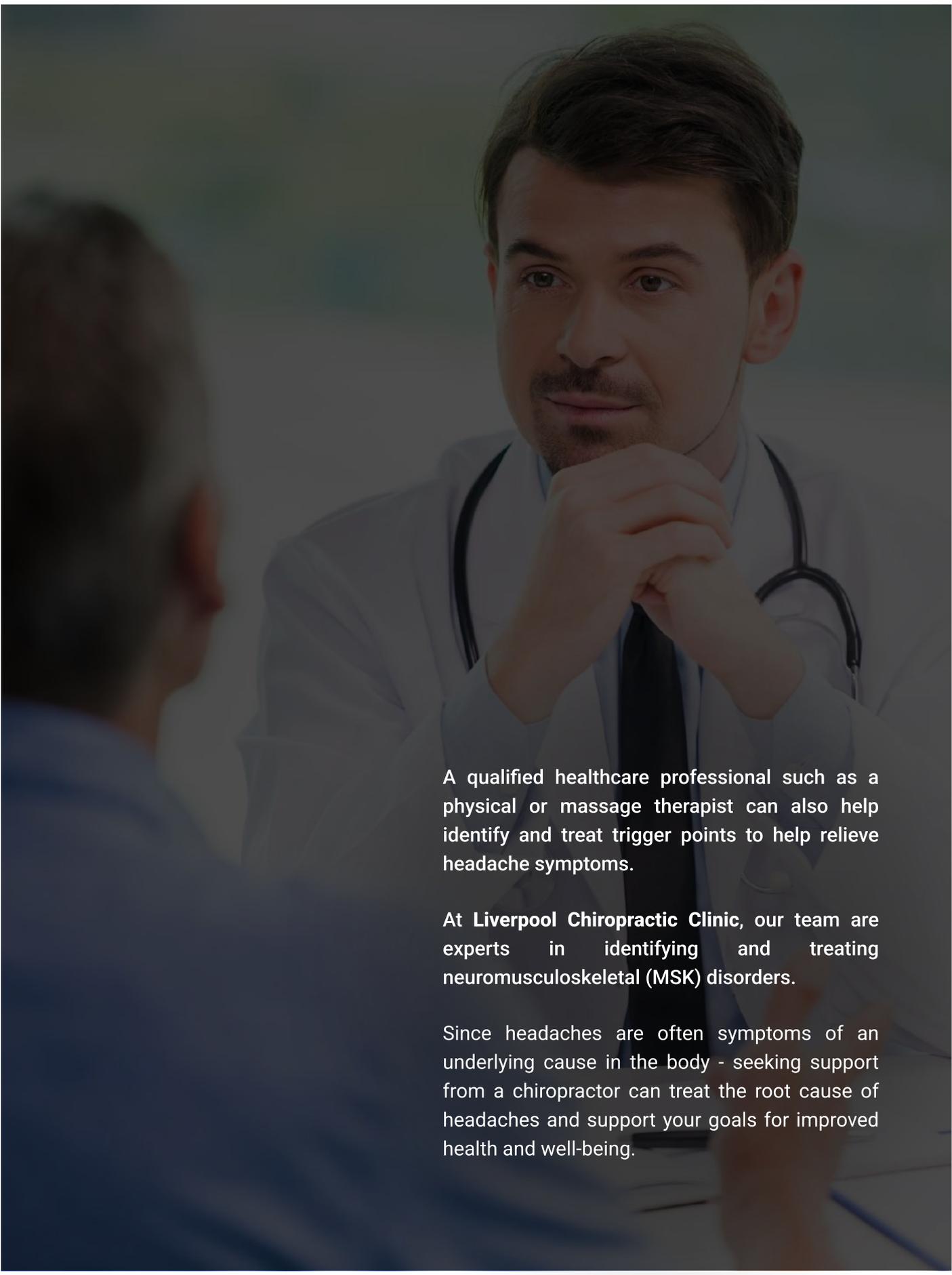
Masseter Muscle

- The masseter is a powerful jaw muscle that closes the jaw during chewing.
- Clenching or grinding of teeth (bruxism) can lead to tightness in the masseter muscle, potentially contributing to headaches.

Temporalis Muscle

- Located on the side of the head, the temporalis muscle is involved in jaw movement during chewing.
- Tension or tightness in the temporalis muscle can contribute to tension headaches, especially when associated with jaw clenching or teeth grinding.



A photograph of a male doctor with a stethoscope around his neck, listening intently to a patient. The image is dimmed to serve as a background for text.

A qualified healthcare professional such as a physical or massage therapist can also help identify and treat trigger points to help relieve headache symptoms.

At **Liverpool Chiropractic Clinic**, our team are experts in identifying and treating neuromusculoskeletal (MSK) disorders.

Since headaches are often symptoms of an underlying cause in the body - seeking support from a chiropractor can treat the root cause of headaches and support your goals for improved health and well-being.



#3 Check Your Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, can sometimes cause headaches.

This happens through:

- 🫀 **Blood vessel changes**
- 🫀 **Increased pressure in the head**
- 🫀 **Some medications used to treat high blood pressure (beta-blockers)**

Not all headaches are caused by high blood pressure, and having high blood pressure doesn't necessarily mean you will experience headaches.

However, if you experience frequent headaches or migraines, it's essential to speak with a healthcare professional to rule out any underlying conditions and to determine the best course of treatment for your individual needs.



#4 Get Your Eyes Checked

Eyestrain can trigger headaches, but luckily, there are proactive measures you can take to reduce the likelihood of them occurring.

Wear Proper Eyewear

If you need glasses or contacts, ensure you wear them when necessary. It's important to have regular check-ups with your optician if you experience changes in your eyesight.

Take Breaks From Screens

Whether you regularly check your phone or work at a computer, give your eyes a break to help them re-adjust and reduce eyestrain.

Follow the 20:20:20 rule. Every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break to look at something 20 feet away.

Your optician can identify if eyesight problems are causing you to strain your eyes and prescribe measurements to suit your circumstances.

Even if you feel that your eyesight isn't a problem but suffer headaches, a trip to the optician can rule out potential triggers.



#5 Check Your Medication

Certain medications can cause headaches as a side effect. Some include:

Nitroglycerin and Nitrates:

Medications used to treat angina or chest pain associated with heart conditions.

Beta-blockers:

Commonly prescribed for conditions such as hypertension and migraines.

Calcium Channel Blockers:

Medications often used to manage high blood pressure and various cardiovascular conditions.

Phosphodiesterase Inhibitors:

A class of medications prescribed for conditions like erectile dysfunction and pulmonary hypertension.

Hormonal Medications:

Certain contraceptives and hormone replacement therapies may also be associated with headaches in some individuals.

It's essential to be aware of the potential side effects of medications and communicate any concerns or symptoms to your healthcare providers.

Adjustments to the medication regimen or alternative treatments may be considered to manage side effects effectively.

If you are taking any of these medications and are concerned about their side effects, please consult your healthcare professional before stopping use.

Your healthcare provider can recommend alternatives to ensure you still receive the treatment you need without the adverse side effects.

#6 Have Your Teeth Checked

Did you know that dental problems can cause headaches?

It may seem strange, but there is a connection worth exploring if you're on the road to discovering the root cause of your headaches.

Bruxism (Teeth Grinding)

Bruxism is grinding or clenching your teeth, particularly during sleep. This can lead to muscle tension in the jaw and surrounding areas, which can cause headaches. Additionally, continuous grinding can wear down teeth and contribute to other dental problems over time.

Visiting a dentist may be necessary if you grind your teeth.

Your dentist can assess the extent of teeth grinding and recommend solutions like a mouthguard to prevent further damage and reduce headaches.

TMJ Disorders

The temporomandibular joint, or TMJ, connects the jaw to the skull and can cause pain and discomfort in the jaw joint and surrounding muscles, resulting in tension headaches and migraines.

If you experience TMJ pain, a dentist can evaluate the condition of your temporomandibular joint and suggest appropriate treatments or interventions.

Malocclusion (Bad Bite)

If your teeth are not aligned correctly, it can cause an uneven distribution of pressure during biting and chewing. This can lead to muscle tension and headaches.

Your dentist might recommend orthodontic treatments or other dental interventions to correct alignment issues contributing to headaches.

Toothaches

Dental issues can cause toothaches that radiate pain to other parts of the head, leading to headaches.

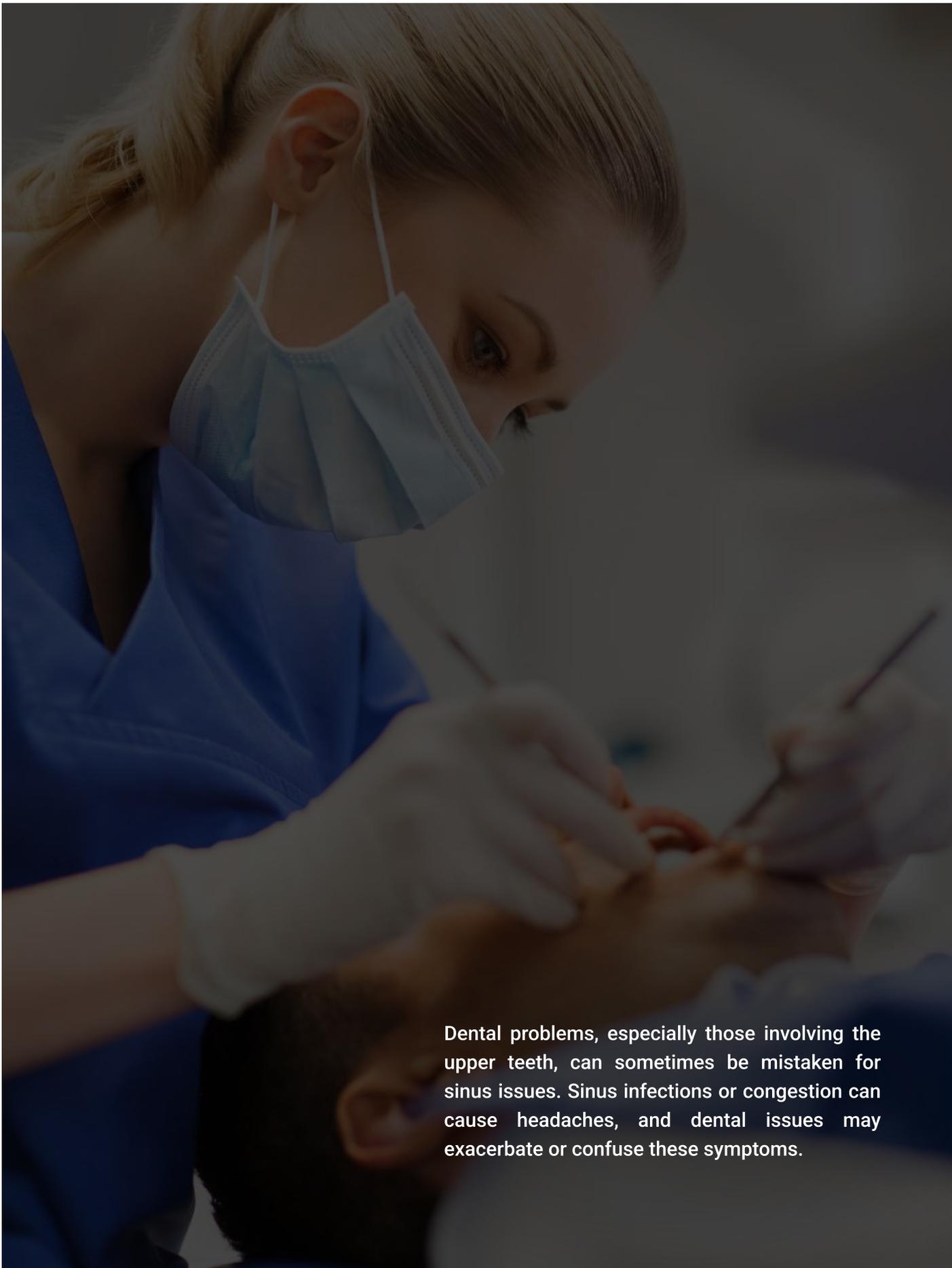
These include:

- Cavities
- Abscesses
- Dental infections

You should promptly address dental problems causing toothaches to prevent the spread of infection, alleviate pain, and potentially address headaches.

Sinus Issues

Dental problems, especially those involving the upper teeth, can sometimes be mistaken for sinus issues. Sinus infections or congestion can cause headaches, and dental issues may exacerbate or confuse these symptoms.



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#7 Monitor Your Hormonal Health

The menstrual cycle, pregnancy, and menopause cause hormonal fluctuations, which can trigger headaches.

Headaches and Your Menstrual Cycle

During the menstrual cycle, fluctuations in estrogen and progesterone levels can lead to headaches in some women.

Specifically, a drop in estrogen levels right before menstruation can trigger headaches. Estrogen has a vasodilatory effect, meaning it can widen blood vessels.

The rapid decline in estrogen can cause the blood vessels to contract and narrow, restricting the blood flow to the brain and causing symptoms associated with headaches and migraines.

The Luteal Phase

The second half of the menstrual cycle is called the luteal phase and occurs **after ovulation** and **before menstruation**.

During this phase, levels of the hormone progesterone increase. Progesterone, like estrogen, affects the central nervous system, including the brain.

It interacts with neurotransmitters and receptors involved in pain modulation and vascular function. Since progesterone has two effects on blood vessels, it can widen and narrow them.

The dilating effect of progesterone leads to more blood flowing to the brain, which could cause migraines.

Cycle Tracking Apps

By utilising a cycle tracking app, you can track your symptoms throughout your cycle and identify patterns for when headaches occur.

Using this information, you can schedule an appointment with your healthcare professional and use your data to discuss potential treatment options for hormonal imbalances.

Combining this approach with other items on the checklist is essential to rule out other causes of frequent headaches.

Headaches During Pregnancy

In the first trimester, changes in hormone levels may trigger headaches, but they typically improve as the pregnancy progresses.

In the third trimester, headaches may be a sign of preeclampsia, a serious pregnancy complication, so you must seek medical attention if this occurs.

Headaches and Menopause

During menopause, a decrease in estrogen levels can lead to headaches.

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) may be used to alleviate menopause-related headaches.

However, the use of HRT comes with risks, and the decision to use HRT should be made individually after a thorough discussion with a healthcare provider.

#8 Stay Hydrated

Dehydration can cause headaches, so drinking enough water throughout the day is essential.

Tips to Increase Hydration:

- Keep a water bottle within easy reach throughout the day to encourage regular sips.
- Use a bottle with measurements to help track your daily water intake.
- Establish habits like drinking water with every meal to incorporate hydration into your daily routine.

Hydration Guidelines:



Daily Intake Amount:

- Aim for 8-10 glasses (64-80 ounces) of water daily, adjusting based on your activity level and climate.



Consider Lifestyle Factors:

- Follow ACE guidelines for exercise hydration, which generally recommend drinking 17-20 ounces of water 2 hours before exercising, 8 ounces 20-30 minutes before, and 7-10 ounces every 10-20 minutes during exercise.



Incorporate Hydrating Foods:

- Obtain water from direct consumption and hydrating foods like watermelon and cucumber.
- Be mindful of sugars and caffeine in beverages, such as tea and coffee, as excessive intake may counteract hydration benefits.



Signs of Dehydration:

- Watch for signs of dehydration like thirst, dry mouth, fatigue, dizziness, or dark urine.
- If these symptoms persist, seek medical attention promptly, as dehydration can have profound health implications.

#9 Limit Caffeine

The recommended daily limit for caffeine intake to avoid headaches can vary depending on the individual's sensitivity to caffeine, age, weight, and overall health.

However, a general guideline for adults is consuming no more than 400 milligrams of caffeine daily.

Consuming more than this amount may lead to caffeine dependency, which can cause:

- Headaches
- Irritability
- Insomnia
- Fatigue
- Digestive issues

Here are some familiar sources of caffeine and their approximate caffeine content:

- Eight oz. cups of brewed coffee: 95-165 mg
- Eight oz. cups of black tea: 25-48 mg
- 12 oz. can of soda: 30-40 mg
- 1 oz. Shot of espresso: 47-64 mg

Be mindful of caffeine intake and reduce it if you experience frequent headaches or other symptoms.

Gradually reducing caffeine intake over time can help prevent withdrawal symptoms and make it easier to reduce caffeine intake to a healthy level.



#10 Maintain a Regular Meal Schedule

Maintaining a regular meal schedule is essential for several reasons, and it can reduce headaches for many individuals. Here are some key factors:



Blood Sugar Stability

Irregular eating patterns, such as skipping meals or going for long periods without food, can lead to fluctuations in blood sugar levels.

When blood sugar drops too low (hypoglycemia), it can trigger headaches in some people. Eating regular, balanced meals helps stabilise blood sugar levels, preventing extreme fluctuations that could contribute to headaches.



Hydration

Dehydration is a common trigger for headaches. Eating regular meals often involves consuming beverages, contributing to overall hydration.

Proper hydration helps maintain blood volume and ensures the efficient transport of nutrients and oxygen to the brain, reducing the likelihood of headaches.



Nutrient Intake

Skipping meals may result in insufficient intake of essential nutrients, such as magnesium, which plays a role in preventing headaches.

A well-balanced diet provides the necessary nutrients for overall health, and deficiencies can sometimes contribute to headaches.

#11 Get Enough Sleep

Lack of sleep can cause headaches by disrupting normal brain function, increasing pain sensitivity, and contributing to tension and migraines.

Adequate sleep is fundamental to our well-being, so getting 7-8 hours of sleep per night is advised.

Here are some tips and tricks that can help improve the quality of your sleep:

☾ **Stick to a sleep schedule:**

- Aim to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. This helps regulate your body's sleep-wake cycle and can improve the quality of your sleep.

☾ **Create a relaxing bedtime routine:**

- Establish a soothing bedtime routine that signals to your body that it's time to wind down. Consider taking a warm bath to promote muscle relaxation.
- Reading a book can help your thoughts transition from the stressors of your day to the world of fiction. This is also a great alternative to scrolling through your phone, which can further stimulate your mind and increase stress.



☾ Create a sleep-conducive environment:

- The right mattress and pillows contribute to proper spinal alignment, reducing discomfort and promoting restful sleep.
- Consider turning off bright lights and using dim lights or lamps before bed.
- Blue light emitted from screens can interfere with the body's production of melatonin, a hormone essential for sleep. Establish a technology-free zone at least 30 minutes before bedtime.

☾ Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol:

- While alcohol may initially induce drowsiness, it can interfere with the later stages of sleep, particularly REM (rapid eye movement) sleep.
- REM is essential for optimal cognitive function, memory recovery, and emotional regulation, so ensuring we prioritise our sleep quality is essential for our overall well-being which can help prevent headaches.
- It's recommended to avoid caffeine at least 6 hours before bed to prevent the stimulating effects caused by caffeine and promote a better night's sleep.
- Nicotine is a central nervous system stimulant, which can increase your heart rate and elevate your blood pressure - leading to poor sleep quality and impacting your overall health.

☾ Exercise regularly:

- Exercise several hours before bedtime to allow the body temperature, heart rate, and adrenaline levels to gradually return to baseline, allowing your body to wind down before bed.
- Physical activity promotes the release of endorphins, the body's feel-good hormones, which can help reduce anxiety and stress that might otherwise interfere with sleep.

☾ Manage stress:

- Regular meditation can help calm the mind, reduce racing thoughts, and create a sense of inner tranquility.
- Deep breathing exercises, such as diaphragmatic or abdominal breathing, can activate the body's relaxation response.
- An evening yoga routine can calm the nervous system, making it beneficial for bedtime.

☾ Consult a healthcare provider:

- Many factors can contribute to problems with sleep, so it's crucial to understand the underlying issues to address the root cause.
- Your healthcare provider can provide a comprehensive approach to addressing sleep problems, which may reduce the likelihood of headaches.



#12 Reduce Exposure to Blue Light

Blue light emitted by electronic devices like screens, smartphones, and tablets may contribute to headaches.

According to studies, blue light affects the brain by suppressing melatonin production, disrupting the natural sleep-wake cycle and potentially leading to headaches.

Mitigation Strategies:

- Limit Screen Time:** Decrease the duration of electronic device usage.
- Use Blue Light Filters:** Use software or glasses with blue light filters.
- Take Regular Breaks:** Integrate breaks into device use.
- Maintain Good Posture:** Alleviate potential stress on the body while using devices.

#13 Assess Your Posture

Poor posture, especially forward head posture and upper crossed posture can contribute to headaches.



Forward Head Posture

This happens when the head juts forward from the natural alignment with the spine, which can strain the neck and upper back muscles, leading to tension-type headaches.



Upper Crossed Posture

Most common among desk-bound individuals, is characterised by rounded shoulders and a forward head position. This posture can create imbalances in muscle strength and contribute to muscle tension and headaches.

How Can Poor Posture Lead to Headaches?

When your posture is not aligned, the muscles in your neck and upper back can become strained and overworked, which can cause tension and may trigger headaches.

Additionally, bad posture can affect the alignment of your spine, potentially leading to nerve compression and irritation, which can also contribute to headache symptoms.



Alleviation Strategies:



Ergonomic Workspace:

Ensure your work environment is set up ergonomically, with your computer monitor at eye level and your chair providing proper support.



Regular Breaks:

Take short breaks throughout the day to stretch and change positions, avoiding prolonged periods of sitting or standing in one position.



Strengthening Exercises:

Engage in exercises that strengthen the neck, upper back, and core muscles to support proper posture.



Awareness:

Be mindful of your posture during various activities, such as sitting, standing, and using electronic devices. Make a conscious effort to maintain a neutral spine and avoid prolonged slouching or leaning forward periods.



Stretching:

Incorporate regular stretching exercises to alleviate muscle tension and maintain flexibility.

By addressing poor posture through these strategies, you can reduce the frequency and severity of headaches associated with musculoskeletal strain.

If you suspect poor posture is causing your headaches, seek advice from a healthcare provider. A chiropractor can assess your posture and recommend solutions to alleviate symptoms.

#14 Optimise Your Office Set-Up

Prolonged sitting or office work can be one of the main culprits for poor posture and the onset of headaches.

Here are some tips for setting up an office space for good posture:



Chair

- Choose a chair with adjustable height and lumbar support.
- Your feet should be flat on the floor, with your knees at a 90-degree angle and your hips level with your knees.
- Adjust the chair height so your arms are parallel to the desk surface.



Desk

- Your desk should be at a height that allows you to maintain a straight back with your elbows at a 90-degree angle.
- If your desk is too high, use a footrest to raise your feet and maintain proper alignment.



Lighting

- Good lighting reduces eye strain and maintains good posture.
- Avoid glare on your screen, and position your desk near a window for natural light.



Monitor

- Position your computer monitor so that the top of the screen is at or slightly below eye level.
- This will help prevent neck strain and encourage good posture. Consider using a monitor stand or adjustable arm to achieve the proper height.



Keyboard and mouse

- Your keyboard and mouse should be positioned so that your wrists are straight and your elbows are at a 90-degree angle.
- Consider using a wrist rest to reduce strain on your wrists.



Breaks

- Take regular breaks to stretch, move around, and rest your eyes.
- Consider using a timer or reminder to encourage breaks every 60 minutes.



#15 Sleep Posture

Maintaining a good sleep posture can help prevent headaches caused by muscle tension and poor blood circulation.

Here are some tips for a good sleep posture to avoid headaches:



Sleep on your back:

This is considered the best position for preventing headaches as it allows your head, neck, and spine to maintain a neutral alignment.



Use a supportive pillow:

Choose a pillow that is not too high or too low to maintain proper spinal alignment and reduce muscle tension.



Keep your neck in a neutral position:

Avoid sleeping with your neck in a twisted or bent position.



Avoid sleeping with your arm under your head:

This can put pressure on your neck and cause muscle tension. Keep your arms at your sides, or use a pillow to support them.



Avoid sleeping on your stomach:

Place a small pillow under your hips to help maintain proper spinal alignment to avoid straining your neck and spine.

If you continue to experience headaches despite making changes to your sleep posture, it's a good idea to **talk to your healthcare provider** to rule out any underlying conditions that may be contributing to your symptoms.



#16 Adopt Relaxation Techniques

The parasympathetic nervous system is responsible for the body's "rest and digest" response, which helps to promote relaxation and reduce stress.

Some other techniques can help you enter a parasympathetic zone:

- **Yoga:**

Blend physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation for relaxation, stress reduction, and enhanced well-being.

- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation:**

Tense and then relax different muscle groups to reduce tension and induce relaxation.

- **Guided Imagery:**

Visualise a serene scene to diminish stress and anxiety and promote relaxation.

- **Meditation:**

Focus on your breath or an object, allowing thoughts to flow without judgment.

- **Aromatherapy:**

Harness the calming properties of essential oils like lavender and chamomile through diffusion or topical application.

- **Massage:**

Ease muscle tension, promote relaxation, and reduce stress and anxiety through massage.

- **Mindfulness:**

Embrace the present moment without judgment to alleviate stress and enhance relaxation.

These techniques can be practiced individually or in combination to help you get into a parasympathetic zone and promote relaxation to prevent headaches.

It's essential to find what works best for you and to practice regularly to see the most benefits.

#17 Nutrients and Supplements

It is essential to ensure you get enough vitamins and minerals to prevent headaches and improve overall health.

Here are 5 of the primary nutrient deficiencies that cause headaches:



Vitamin B6

B6 deficiency can lead to a decrease in serotonin levels in the brain. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that is involved in the regulation of mood, appetite, and sleep. Low serotonin levels have been associated with headaches and migraines - making it an essential vitamin to integrate into your diet.



Iron

Iron is involved in the transport of oxygen to the tissues, and low levels may lead to a lack of oxygen in the brain and the development of headaches.

Add more iron sources to your diet through red meat, poultry, fish, legumes, nuts and seeds, and grains.

You should prioritise proper food sources before considering supplements to prevent or reduce the severity of migraines and headaches.



Vitamin D

Vitamin D regulates inflammation and supports immune system activity; insufficient levels may compromise energy metabolism, leading to inadequate energy production and potential headache triggers.

Fatty fish, egg yolks, and cod liver oil are all widespread sources of Vitamin D, which can easily be incorporated into your diet.



Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin)

B2 is a water-soluble vitamin involved in energy metabolism and the production of red blood cells. A deficiency can result in an insufficient supply of energy and oxygen to the brain and, therefore, cause headaches.



Magnesium

Responsible for regulating nerve and muscle function, blood sugar and blood pressure; a lack of magnesium impairs blood flow, triggering muscle tension inflammation and increasing pain susceptibility



General Headache Management

💊 Magnesium: 400-500 mg daily

Magnesium may help reduce the frequency and severity of menstrual migraines by promoting the relaxation of blood vessels and reducing inflammation.

💊 Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin): 400 mg daily

Riboflavin enhances energy production in brain cells, which can result in reduced headache frequency and severity.

💊 Coenzyme Q10: 100-200 mg daily

CoQ10 works by reducing inflammation and improving energy production in the brain cells, which can decrease the severity of migraines.

💊 Butterbur: 50-75 mg daily

Butterbur mitigates inflammation, blood vessel constriction, muscle spasms, and neuronal hyperexcitability associated with headache development.

Menstrual Migraines

All of the above are suitable supplements for menstrual migraines, but the following contains

a more targeted response to problems associated with menstruation.

💊 Omega-3 fatty acids

Omega-3 fatty acids may help reduce inflammation and promote healthy blood flow, which can help eliminate pressure caused by menstruation.

💊 Vitex (Chaste Tree Berry): 400-500mg daily

Vitex can influence the pituitary gland, which can help regulate hormonal imbalances responsible for hormonal headaches and migraines.

Important Notes

- *Supplements should not replace prescribed medication.*
- *Consult a healthcare provider before starting new supplements.*
- *Address nutrient deficiencies under professional guidance.*
- *Maintain a balanced diet for overall health and headache prevention.*

#18 Integrate Breathwork

Breathing is an essential function, but it often happens unconsciously in our daily lives. How we breathe can directly impact our nervous system, influencing the balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic branches.

The sympathetic branch readies our body for action, like 'fight or flight,' while the parasympathetic branch helps us relax and recover, often called 'rest and digest.'

Breathing slowly and deeply signals the body that it is safe, promoting the parasympathetic branch's 'rest and digest' response.

Shallow and rapid breathing can trigger the sympathetic branch, initiating the 'fight or flight' response

This is where breathwork is different to breathing.

Breathwork involves intentionally controlling your breathing pattern to reduce stress and anxiety. It is our body's natural superpower to counterbalance the 'fight or flight' response as it stimulates the vagus nerve, a key player in the parasympathetic nervous system.

Important: It's essential to consult your doctor before doing breathwork if you have a respiratory condition.





Belly Breathing vs Chest Breathing

Belly breathing, or diaphragmatic breathing, is more effective than chest breathing for stress management.

It involves deep breaths, filling the lungs and expanding the diaphragm. This slows heart rate, reduces tension, and promotes relaxation.

The increase in oxygen flow to the brain enhances mood and cognitive function.

How to Practice:

1. Lie down or sit with a straight back.
2. Place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest.
3. Breathe slowly through your nose, feeling your belly rise.
4. Hold briefly, exhale slowly through your mouth, feeling your stomach fall.
5. Repeat, focusing on your breath for relaxation.

Belly Breathing for Vagal Nerve Stimulation

- ✅ Prioritise belly breathing to stimulate the diaphragm.
- ✅ Maintain a rhythmic breathing pattern.
- ✅ Breathe through the nose.
- ✅ Exhale twice as long as you inhale (e.g., 3 seconds in, 6 seconds out).
- ✅ Avoid breath holds.

Incorporate these techniques into your daily routine, with a focus on before sleep for a calming state conducive to rest.

By incorporating breathwork techniques that specifically target Vagal Nerve Stimulation, you can reduce headaches by promoting relaxation, alleviating stress, and mitigating factors associated with tension and discomfort in the head and neck.

#19 Exercise Regularly

Exercising regularly can help reduce the frequency and severity of headaches for several reasons:

🧠 Boosted blood flow:

Enhanced circulation sends more oxygen and nutrients to the brain, potentially easing headaches.

🧘 Stress relief:

Regular exercise diminishes stress, offering preventive measures against tension headaches.

🌟 Endorphin boost:

The release of endorphins is a natural painkiller that can alleviate the perception of headache pain.

😴 Enhanced sleep:

Consistent exercise improves sleep quality and duration, reducing the likelihood and intensity of headaches.

🧘 Posture perfection:

Combat headaches caused by poor neck and shoulder posture with regular exercise, reducing muscle tension and preventing pain.

Exercising regularly is essential to your overall well-being, and pairing an active lifestyle with regular visits to your chiropractor can be an incredible proactive measure to reduce headaches and increase your wellness.



#20 Understand Food Intolerances

The most effective way to recognise food intolerances is by first considering which compounds in common foods can trigger intolerances and then completing a food diary to track symptoms and eventually eliminate those causing headaches.

First, let's review the top five compounds in foods that cause intolerance, and in the next section, we'll discuss how to follow an elimination diet.



Gluten Intolerance

Gluten, a protein found in wheat, rye, and barley, can induce headaches in individuals with gluten intolerance.

Common sources of gluten include:

- Wheat-based products (bread, pasta)
- Baked goods made from wheat flour



Tyramine Intolerance

Tyramine intolerance affects blood pressure and neurotransmitter levels, which can result in headaches or migraines.

Common sources include:

- Aged cheeses
- Smoked or cured meats
- Fermented foods
- Pickles
- Certain processed meats



Histamine Intolerance

Foods with histamine may trigger intolerances in people, causing headaches.

These include:

- Aged cheeses
- Fermented foods
- Cured meats
- Wine
- Sauerkraut



Caffeine Intolerance

Caffeine can cause vasoconstriction, leading to changes in blood flow and potential pressure changes in the brain, which may contribute to headaches.

You can find caffeine in:

- Coffee
- Tea
- Chocolate
- Some sodas



MSG Intolerance

MSG can trigger nerve cells to release glutamate, which activates the trigeminal nerve system, a critical factor in headache mechanisms.

The primary sources of MSG are found in:

- Processed foods (canned soups)
- Snack foods
- Asian cuisine



Lactose Intolerance

Beyond its primary digestive effects, lactose intolerance can manifest in headaches through digestive distress, dehydration, nutrient malabsorption, and inflammatory response.

Understanding these potential connections is crucial for managing symptoms and seeking appropriate dietary adjustments.



Digestive Distress

Symptoms associated with lactose intolerance can induce headaches as a secondary response due to stress on the digestive system, such as:

- Bloating
- Gas
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhoea

Dehydration

Diarrhoea, prevalent in lactose intolerance, can lead to dehydration, a known trigger for headaches, especially in individuals experiencing frequent bouts of diarrhoea.

Nutrient Absorption

Chronic lactose intolerance may result in nutrient malabsorption, potentially causing deficiencies in nutrients like B vitamins, which can contribute to headaches.

Inflammatory Response

The body's inflammatory reaction to undigested lactose in the gut might trigger headaches, as inflammation can affect various systems, including the nervous system.

Celiac Disease

Celiac disease is when individuals experience adverse reactions to gluten.

One study published in the National Library of Medicine found that patients with celiac disease were significantly more likely to experience migraines compared to a control group.

The study also found that a gluten-free diet reduced the frequency and severity of headaches in these individuals.

However, it is essential to note that not all headaches are related to gluten intolerance, and individuals should consult a healthcare professional for proper diagnosis and treatment.

Following the next step to an elimination diet can provide you and your healthcare provider with data to base any food intolerances off.

#21 Create an Elimination Diet

The elimination diet is a dietary approach used to identify food intolerances or sensitivities by temporarily removing certain foods from the diet and then gradually reintroducing them to see if any symptoms occur.

Here is a 5-phase step-by-step guide for an elimination diet.

PHASE 1 | PREPARATION

- Plan meals excluding targeted foods
- Consult a healthcare professional for guidance
- Ensure your new diet meets your nutritional needs

PHASE 2 | ELIMINATION

- Omit suspected culprits (gluten, dairy, soy, eggs, nuts, shellfish)
- Keep a food diary to track consumption and symptoms

PHASE 3 | REINTRODUCTION

- Gradually reintroduce one food group at a time
- Start with small amounts and monitor for symptoms

PHASE 4 | OBSERVATION

- Post-reintroduction, observe symptoms over subsequent days or weeks
- Identify potential intolerances based on post-reintroduction reactions

PHASE 5 | MAINTENANCE

- Craft a balanced, varied diet meeting nutrient needs
- Avoid trigger foods to manage symptoms effectively

Important Note:

Before starting an elimination diet, please consult your healthcare professional to discuss whether this method suits your circumstances.



Addressing the Root Cause through Chiropractic Care

An inactive or excessive lifestyle can cause poor posture, leading to tension and misalignment in our spine, resulting in headaches and migraines.

Our spine is the primary transmission pathway for vital signals between the brain and the rest of the body, supporting essential functions.

Therefore, identifying and correcting spinal misalignments is critical to improving our overall wellness.

Chiropractic adjustments can help address various health issues, such as headaches, joint pain, posture, and sciatica.

A Holistic Approach to Wellness

Our core philosophy at Liverpool Chiropractic Clinic is to treat the root cause. Chiropractic care is a holistic approach that takes your overall well-being into account.

Through chiropractic adjustments, you can receive the following benefits:

- ✔ Pain relief
- ✔ Improved mobility
- ✔ Headache relief
- ✔ Posture correction
- ✔ Nervous system function
- ✔ Injury prevention
- ✔ Stress reduction
- ✔ Enhanced sports performance
- ✔ Better sleep
- ✔ Immune system support

Our team is dedicated to helping people move, live, and feel better. A spinal assessment can quickly determine treatment options to alleviate headaches. You should include regular chiropractic adjustments in your healthcare plan to lead a life without limits.

