Headaches and Migraines
Identifying causes and providing relief!

Ottawa Holistic Wellness
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Introduction

For some of us headaches and migraines can be persistent and debilitating, forcing us to take time out of our everyday lives and impacting our quality of life.

The medical profession often fails to identify the causes and triggers for headaches and migraines, and solutions focus on pharmaceutical treatments.

Our experienced practitioners offer some insights into the possible causes for your headaches, simple ways in which you can prevent them and effective natural treatments that are available.

Gain some relief now and live your life to the full!
CHAPTER 1

NOT ALL HEADACHES ARE CREATED EQUALLY

CATEGORIZING HEADACHES

Most have us have suffered a headache or two in our lifetime. Some severe, some mild, some that lasted 2 days, some that lasted an hour, some that may have been pounding, and some that may have made you feel sick to your stomach. Whatever symptoms of a headache you have or have had, they often get in the way of our activities of daily living and can be quite debilitating.

It is important to know that not all headaches are the same and are unique to each individual. Understanding different types of headaches and how they are classified, may help you better understand how to cope with symptoms better or allow you to help someone who is suffering.

Although a lot of research has been done on headaches, we still do not know the exact causes and reasons for certain headaches. We can however, classify headaches into one of 4 categories. Does your headache seem to fall into one of these categories?

1. Tension Headaches

Tension headaches usually result in a pressure like pain on both sides of the head, usually in the temples, forehead or back of the neck. Stress can be a trigger of this headache but there are usually no warning signs. It can start mild and gradually get worse as the day or night progresses.

2. Cluster Headaches

Cluster headaches are the most un-common form of headache. They occur in under 1% of the population and are more common in males. These headaches can be very severe and debilitating. Cluster headaches can occur for weeks and usually cause intense pain behind the eye. The cause is unknown however they usually result in runny nose and watery eyes.
3. Migraine without Aura (Classic Migraine):

This is what we consider a typical migraine that results in a pulsing/pounding pain on one or both sides of your head (usually temple). Nausea is often associated with migraines although most people do not vomit. People who suffer from migraines are sometimes unable to perform activities of daily living due to their intensity. Lights and sounds often make the headache worse.

4. Migraine with Aura

Aura is the sensation or feeling you may have before a migraine. It may alert you that one is coming. Symptoms of a migraine with aura may seem similar to those of a stroke so it is important you talk to your doctor about it if you are experiencing this. For example, flashing lights, blurred vision, blind spots, speech difficulty and altered smell are considered aura.

Headaches can be very serious and should not be ignored. It is advised that if you are having the “worst headache ever”, you should seek immediate medical help. It is also possible to have headaches that are not classified as one in the above categories. Trauma, concussions, infection, dehydration, and allergic reactions are just some reasons that you may also experience headaches. Headaches are never “normal” and should not have to be something you deal with on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.

Many forms of alternative medicine can help you with your migraine symptoms. Here at Ottawa Holistic Wellness, we have many experienced therapists who can help you prevent, resolve, or alleviate headaches. For example, acupuncture, chiropractic, massage, osteopathy, and allergy treatment may help.

About the Author

Dr. Stacia Kelly is a chiropractor at Ottawa Holistic Wellness Clinic, located in the downtown Ottawa core. The clinic has over 15 different wellness practitioners. They work as a team, and consider individuals symptoms to provide a truly holistic approach. This enables them to identify and treat the underlying causes of your issues to give deep, long lasting healing.

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CHAPTER 2

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A HEADACHE AND A MIGRAINE

DIFFERENCES

Migraines
Usually, migraines are more intense than simple headaches. Movement and exercise will make a migraine worse as it increases the intra-cranial pressure. The pulsing pain of a migraine is due to the vasoconstriction (narrowing of the blood vessels in the head) following by a vasodilatation (widening of the blood vessels). Most of the time, migraines affect only one side of the head.

Migraines may also have other symptoms along with the pain, these can include nausea, and intolerance to light (photophobia) and noise (phono-phobia). Sometimes, migraines are more focused around the eyes.

Headaches
Headaches can be occipital, in the back of the head, or they may be frontal, in the temples and forehead areas. The sensation may be described as a pressure or a feeling of clamping. The cause for this can be skeletal, originating from the neck being misaligned, muscular triggered by tightness in the neck, shoulder and back muscles, postural, or come from an imbalance in the rest of the body.

Occipital neuralgia
Another kind of headache is called Occipital or Arnold’s neuralgia. It’s due to the auricular nerve, called Arnold’s nerve, which exits the spine at the second cervical (neck) bone. It passes through the upper neck muscles and provides the nerve supply for the scalp. Usually the pain starts in the upper neck and extends to the occipital bone (the part of your skull at the top of your neck), the top of the skull and continues to frontal bone (forehead) and behind the eyes. Eyebrow and ear areas may also be painful.
TREATMENTS

There are many treatments out there to relieve headaches and migraines. One option is **osteopathy** which will address dysfunction in the head, neck and whole body.

The Sacrum
It is important to resolve any dysfunction in the sacrum or tail bone. This will disturb the craniosacral axis and have an influence on the neck and then on the head...that is why we'll make sure that there is **correct mobility in the pelvis**.

The Neck
The next step is to focus on the soft tissues of the neck, **releasing any tightness or stiffness** which is impacting the mobility of the cranial (skull) area.

Cranial Techniques
Subtle cranial techniques can be used to give more mobility to the fascia inside of the skull and to work with the vascular system to rebalance the fluids to **decrease the pressure and stiffness**.

The TMJ
Dysfunction in the TMJ (temporomandibular joint, your jaw) may also cause headaches. For people who are very stressed or clench their teeth it is important to assess these joints and to **make sure the temporomandibular joints are relaxed**.

Digestive Health
The health of the digestive system can also be part of the picture.

If the quality of the tissues in the liver or in the stomach are not in good order, it can disturb the nervous and vascular systems in the whole body. Digestive nerves exit the cranium and pass through the neck. If there is any dysfunction or imbalance in the neck area, then this will prevent the correct transfer of information to the digestive system, interfering with correct digestive function, explaining some of the tightness in the neck and triggering headaches or migraines.

The osteopath can ensure **correct mobility in the bones of the neck and cranium** and also **improve the organ’s mobility and internal motion** which will have an effect on the circulatory system.
OTHER CAUSES

**Hormonal disorders**
It is not unusual for women to have headaches or migraines that are related to their menstrual cycle. In this case, it is often useful to check the liver, which is responsible of the breakdown and metabolising of the hormones.

**Diet and allergies**
Many foods have been linked to headaches and migraines. You could try an elimination diet or have an allergy test to determine if this is the case for you.

**Weather patterns**
Many people complain that a change in the weather will bring on a migraine.

**Injuries and surgeries**
Head injuries, concussions, trips and falls can all trigger headaches or migraines along with dental/orthodontic treatment.

And remember:  
*It is not “normal’ to experience headaches and migraines. Book you appointment now and find out how you could be pain free!*  

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**About the Author**

Justine Gapihan studied osteopathy in France. She has studied many techniques including structural, muscle energy, functional, fascial, craniosacral therapy and Jones counter-strain techniques. Justine’s experiences ranges from babies to the elderly, people with disabilities and athletes.

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Approximately 8% of Canadians suffer from chronic headaches each year.

That equates to 76,000 people in Ottawa. I have been lucky so far that I can count the number of times I have had a severe headache on one hand. I have however seen many clients who have not been so fortunate who have suffered headaches everyday for sometimes years.

There are many causes of chronic headaches that I could cover, however in this article I want to describe some less well-known causes that I see in my functional medicine practice and how to get rid of them naturally.

HISTAMINE INTOLERANCE

Histamine is a chemical produced by your immune system when you are exposed to an allergen, such as grass pollens. People with histamine intolerance become oversensitive to histamine due to an excess buildup in their bodies. The most common reason for this build up is through the presence of gut infections including parasites and SIBO.

Infections in your gut stimulate the production of histamine which then spreads throughout the body. Moreover, if you consume foods that are high in histamines, such as fermented foods, reheated meat, and tomatoes, this will further increase levels and worsen symptoms.

One of the most usual symptoms of histamine intolerance is chronic headaches. Other typical symptoms include anxiety, dizziness, heartburn, and hives.
If you suspect that histamine intolerance is the cause of your headaches I suggest the following;

Cut down on your consumption of high histamine foods.
If you feel better removing these foods then seek out a functional medicine practitioner or naturopathic doctor who is experienced in dealing with histamine intolerance and, in particular, identifying and treating SIBO and parasite infection.

LOW THYROID FUNCTION

One of the less well-known symptoms of low thyroid function is morning headaches. Other symptoms of low thyroid include fatigue, dry skin, hair loss, brittle nails and cold intolerance. Low thyroid function is more common in women than men. The most common causes of low thyroid I see in my practice are Hashimoto's Disease and SIBO. Hashimoto's is an autoimmune condition that is often triggered by gluten and or casein (the protein found in dairy).

Low thyroid is often poorly diagnosed by doctors due to poor interpretation of blood test markers.

What can you do?
Firstly, consult your family doctor and ask them to run a full thyroid panel. A full thyroid panel should include TSH, Free T4, Free T3, Thyroid Peroxidase and Thyroglobulin antibodies.
If your doctor is reluctant to run the full panel, then seek out a naturopathic doctor who can order these tests for a fee.

If your doctor says your results appear within normal ranges, then find a Functional Medicine Doctor or Naturopathic Doctor, who are trained to look at thyroid blood markers from a more optimal perspective. If they see any abnormalities, they will then help you find the root of the problem.

If you are unable to do either of the above, I suggest removing both gluten and dairy from your diet for at least two weeks to see if your symptoms resolve. If avoiding dairy and gluten helps you can try reintroducing each food on at a time to find out which foods trigger your symptoms.
BAROMETRIC PRESSURE CHANGES

If you live in Ottawa, you will be well aware that the weather can be very changeable and with this will come huge swings in barometric pressure.
For most people, this is just a way life, but for others, these swings in pressure can bring on headaches. Currently, there is no scientifically validated reason for people reacting to pressure changes.
That being said in my experience of treating people with weather-related headaches in the majority of cases there was an emotionally traumatic event that preceded the onset. For example, one client developed headaches after a very stressful week at work during which there had been several thunderstorms over Ottawa.

If you suspect that your chronic headaches are triggered by barometric pressure changes I suggest the following;

Think back to when you first started to get the headaches and try to remember what was going on in your life at that time and whether the weather was particularly changeable.

If the answer is yes, then I suggest that your body has been conditioned to react to pressure changes, and I recommend you investigate some therapies that I have found useful in dealing with such issues. These treatments include Emotional Freedom Technique, Hypnotherapy and Natural Allergy Therapy.

Disclaimer
This article in not intended to provide medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

About the Author

Dominick Hussey, Functional Medicine and Osteopathic Manual Practitioner, combines osteopathy, functional medicine with nutrition and lifestyle counselling in his practice, and strongly believes that healing is a process in which the patient must take an active role.
He has become disillusioned with modern approaches which simply provide a band-aid approach to mask and temporarily relieve symptoms. His passion is in determining the real, underlying cause for those symptoms and in so doing to bring about true, deep, lasting healing.

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BOOK NOW
An estimated 2.7 million Canadians, more women than men, suffer from migraine headaches.

A migraine is often a throbbing, one-sided headache with nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to bright lights, or aura. An aura can be a quick disturbance of visual or neurological function, and usually precedes a migraine attack.

CAUSES FOR MIGRAINES

There are a few different causes of migraines, and one or more could be at play in individual cases.

Medication and stimulants

Tobacco use, caffeine consumption, and birth control pills can increase the frequency of migraines in certain people (1,3). It is also worthwhile to check if the side effects of any medications you are taking may be worsening your headaches.

Changes in blood vessel pressure

One theory is that blood vessels increase pressure by constricting, and then reactively dilating. This sudden alteration in blood flow can lead to a migraine headache.

Food intolerances

A possible underlying cause of migraine headaches is an intolerance to wheat, citrus, eggs, tea, coffee, chocolate, milk, beef, corn, cane sugar, yeast, mushrooms, and/or peas. Elimination of these offending foods for 8 weeks helped 60 migraine patients reduce their frequency of headaches from 402 to just 6 per month (3).
Mitochondria

Another theory suggests that issues with mitochondria, the powerhouses of the cell, affect energy production, and causes a migraine.

Magnesium, B vitamins and CoQ10

Interestingly, magnesium is typically deficient in migraine patients (4). Supplementation of magnesium can improve mitochondrial energy output, and reduce the frequency and/or severity of migraine headaches (5). Riboflavin (vitamin B2), and Niacinamide (vitamin B3) can be effective for migraine relief as they play important roles in mitochondrial energy production. Coenzyme Q10 also benefits mitochondria and, as a result, migraine headaches (6).

Fibromyalgia or myofascial pain syndrome

If you suffer from migraines and also have a history of fibromyalgia or myofascial pain syndrome, you may benefit from mitochondrial support, magnesium, and 5-HTP (9, 10).

Salt

Too large of an ingestion of salt can lead to a migraine 6-12 hours later (2).

Hormonal links

Estrogen has been linked to menstrual migraine headaches, and postmenopausal women may experience a reduction in migraines and tension-type headaches due to a decline in sex hormones. Serotonin agonists like 5-HTP may acutely relieve and prevent menstrual headaches (8). An underlying cause of anxiety and insomnia may perpetuate migraine and tension-type headaches amongst postmenopausal women and the general population (7).

In Conclusion:

There are many causes for migraines and correspondingly numerous treatment alternatives; this was just a small summary of strategies for a big headache. We are all unique, your Naturopathic Doctor can assess the possible causes for your migraines and suggest ways in which they can be relieved by using diet, nutrition and by removing the triggers.
References:


About the Author

Dr Eric Viegas has an undergraduate degree in Health Sciences from The University of Western Ontario and has also completed doctorate equivalency from The Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine (CCNM). He spent his years of study at CCNM devoted to acupuncture, botanical medicine, nutrition, homoeopathy, physical medicine, and counselling.

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Chapter 5

Are Food Allergies Causing Your Headaches?

Common Allergens That Could Be to Blame

Are you one of the many people who suffer from chronic or severe headaches? Perhaps you have been through the medical profession and have no answers?

I have had numerous clients who experience headaches and migraines and have been to a whole range of doctors, had multiple tests performed only to receive no answers as to the cause of their pain.

An aspect that is often overlooked is the impact that food allergies and intolerances can have.

I speak from personal experience; if I eat any corn products I suffer for several days with what I would describe as a 'clamping' headache - my head feels like it is in a vice and I cannot think straight.

No corn, no pain!

Some doctors may suggest that you avoid certain common food triggers such as coffee, chocolate, wheat, corn, cow's milk, eggs, citrus, sugar, alcohol, artificial additives, colourings, sweeteners (especially aspartame) and MSG.

However, these are just that, common triggers; every one of us is a unique individual, and as such we all react to different things.

If you don't feel well, get bloated, or tired after a meal it is a good indication that the food that you are eating is not suiting your body and may be a factor in your headaches.

Elimination Diet

An elimination diet where you remove the common food triggers and any others that you suspect will help you to determine whether they are actually a factor for you. Remember that if your headaches only occur periodically then you may need to remove the foods for several weeks or even a month or so to determine their effect.
You will probably notice a range of other improvements too, including your digestion, energy and stamina, muscle function, sleep, memory, concentration and others.
Once you have established that you are better without the foods you can reintroduce them, one at a time. It may take a few days or more for any reaction to become apparent so I recommend that you wait 2 weeks before adding another food back in.

**Allergy testing**
You can also have allergy testing. This can take the form of blood or skin tests, however, I find these to be of limited use when looking for the cause of headaches as they provide a general list of allergens, and do not identify the specific triggers for your headaches.

I usually recommend muscle testing with an experienced practitioner. You will get the results at the time of the test and it is possible to identify specific triggers for your headaches including allergies, intolerances, nutritional deficiencies and any emotional or structural components.

Once you have identified the food triggers it is easy to then avoid them.

**We are what we eat!**
Diet in general will play a huge role in relief from headaches and migraines and in general wellness.
One of the biggest things you can do is try to return to a more natural, 'real food' diet.
So, cooking from scratch, using organic produce where possible and sticking to grass fed, free range meats and poultry or wild fish.
It can actually be cheaper to eat this way, and you will be surprised how good you can feel.

Of course this has to be balanced with reality, so it is equally important to accept that it is not always possible to eat this way, and not to stress about those occasions when you ‘cheat’!

And, finally, water is an essential part of that natural diet. Dehydration will ALWAYS cause headaches.. so try to get 2 litres a day.

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**About the Author**

*Sue Taylor* is co-founder and Clinic Director at Ottawa Holistic Wellness. She works as a Natural Allergist and Energy Healer. Her passion is to work with clients to find the root cause of their health concerns, then offering ways in which to resolve these causes.

She will support you through any necessary changes and help you to regain your life!

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**BOOK NOW**
Do you endure unexplained headaches or migraines?

Histamine is a chemical associated with your immune, digestive, and central nervous systems. As a neurotransmitter, it conveys important messages from your body to your brain. It is also an ingredient of stomach acid that helps you digest food in your stomach.

You might be most familiar with histamine as it associates with the immune system. If you’ve endured seasonal allergies or food allergies, you may have noticed that antihistamine medications such as Zyrtec, Allegra or Benedryl provide quick relief of your symptoms.

This process occurs because histamine’s role in the body is to cause an immediate inflammatory response. It serves as a warning to your immune system, of any potential threats. Histamine causes your blood vessels to widen, or dilate so that your white blood cells can quickly find and attack a harmful substance, pathogen or infection.

The histamine accumulation is what gives you a headache and leaves you feeling flushed, itchy and miserable.

This process is part of the body’s natural immune response, but if you don’t break down histamine correctly, you could develop what we call histamine intolerance.

Because it travels throughout your bloodstream, histamine can affect your digestive tract, lungs, skin, brain, and cardiovascular system, leading to a broad range of symptoms that can make it difficult to diagnose the underlying cause.
Typical symptoms of histamine intolerance include:

- Headaches/migraines
- Difficulty falling asleep, easily woken up
- Hypertension
- Vertigo or dizziness
- Arrhythmia, or accelerated heart rate
- Difficulty regulating body temperature
- Anxiety
- Nausea, vomiting
- Abdominal cramps
- Flushing
- Nasal congestion, sneezing, difficulty breathing
- Abnormal menstrual cycle
- Hives and rashes
- Fatigue
- Tissue swelling

Causes of High Histamine Levels

There a number of reasons why you may have high histamine levels.

- Allergies (IgE reactions)
- Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO)
- Increased Intestinal Permeability or Leaky gut
- Gastrointestinal bleeding
- Alcohol drinks such as wine, champagne, and beer
- Diamine Oxidase (DAO) deficiency

Histamine in foods

In addition to the histamine made in your body, there is also a mixture of foods that naturally contain histamine, create the release of histamine, or block the enzyme that breaks down histamine, Diamine Oxidase.

How do I break down Histamine?

Once made, histamine is either stored or broken down by an enzyme. Histamine in the central nervous system is broken down primarily by histamine N-methyltransferase (HMT) while histamine in the digestive tract is broken down mainly by diamine oxidase (DAO).

Though both enzymes play a significant role in histamine break down, the American Society for Clinical Nutrition found that DAO is the primary enzyme responsible for breaking down ingested histamine.
So if you’re deficient in DAO, you likely have symptoms of histamine intolerance.

**Causes of Low DAO**

- Gluten sensitivity
- Intestinal Permeability
- Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO)
- DAO-blocking foods such as alcohol, energy drinks, and tea
- Genetic mutations (common in people of Asian-descent)
- Gut Inflammation from Crohn’s, ulcerative colitis, and inflammatory bowel disease.
- Medications:
  - Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) such as ibuprofen and aspirin
  - Antidepressants (Cymbalta, Effexor, Prozac, Zoloft)
  - Immune modulators (Humira, Enbrel, Plaquenil)
  - Anti-arrhythmics including Propranolol, Metoprolol, Cardizem, and Norvasc
  - Antihistamines including Allegra, Zyrtec, and Benadryl
  - Histamine (H2) blockers including Tagamet, Pепcid, and Zantac - Although histamine blockers, a class of acid-reducing drugs, seem like they would prevent histamine intolerance, these medications can deplete DAO levels in your body.

**Testing for Histamine Intolerance**

- **Elimination diet** - Remove the above high histamine foods for 30 days and reintroduce them one at a time.

- **Blood Testing** - You can ask your doctor to test for histamine and DAO levels. A high ratio of histamine to DAO means that you are ingesting too much histamine and that you don’t have sufficient DAO to break it down.

- **Trial of DAO** - If testing is unavailable to you, you could only try a diet low in histamine and add DAO supplementation at each meal. If your symptoms resolve, you could have reduced DAO.

**How to Treat Histamine Intolerance?**

My recommendation is usually to avoid the high histamine foods for 1-3 months. Add in a supplement of DAO at each meal. And most importantly, find the root cause of the histamine intolerance.
If you’re on a medication that is causing the intolerance working with your physician to wean off these medications is essential.

The main reasons for histamine intolerance that I see in my practice are SIBO and gluten intolerance, which cause a leaky gut.

If you currently have histamine intolerance, you may not have to avoid these foods permanently. It can be a short-term answer until your histamine or DAO levels revert to their optimal ranges.

Depending on your personal circumstances, you may discover that you tolerate some foods better than others, so I encourage you to stay positive as you learn priceless information about your body!

About the Author

Dominick Hussey, Functional Medicine and Osteopathic Manual Practitioner, combines osteopathy, functional medicine with nutrition and lifestyle counselling in his practice, and strongly believes that healing is a process in which the patient must take an active role. He has become disillusioned with modern approaches which simply provide a band-aid approach to mask and temporarily relieve symptoms. His passion is in determining the real, underlying cause for those symptoms and in so doing to bring about true, deep, lasting healing.

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Knowing when to be concerned about your headache

Headache; a pain in the cranium or head.

Who has not had a headache at one time or another? Such is the range and variety of these aches that they need to be qualified and quantified to determine cause and treatment.

Are they occasional or chronic?
How long do they last?
What is their intensity?
What seems to initiate them?
Where in your head are they located?
Are they accompanied by other signs or symptoms?
What, if anything, brings relief?
Is there psychological or emotional stress involved?

Structure of the head

The cranium (skull) is composed of bone, muscle, fascia, blood vessels and nerves, as is the rest of the body. It has the added components of the cerebrospinal fluid in which floats the brain, and the special senses of sight, taste, smell and sound.

When to see a doctor

If the headache is the result of a pathological / medical problem then, obviously, a medical doctor needs to be consulted. Depending on the bio-chemical imbalance involved, another type of alternative practitioner such as a naturopath or homeopath might be consulted.

An osteopath can of course work in tandem with any of the above practitioners especially if the causes are complicated.
Osteopathy is a complete system of manual therapy medicine which always attempts to get past a symptom, such as a headache, to an underlying cause.

With an assessment the osteopath will determine if the headache is a bio-mechanical or bio-chemical problem, or a mixture of both. A structural assessment will help to determine if the cause is mechanical.

An assessment of the viscera (the organs) will help determine if there is a body chemistry problem, and a craniosacral assessment will help determine if the problem is related to the central nervous system.

**Tension headaches**

These seem to be most common, and result from misalignment of the structure(s) of the body. This then creates a stress, tension or pull on any tissue level; bone, muscle, circulation, fascia and nerve either in or outside the central nervous system.

Remember, nerves are always involved - if we didn't have nerves we wouldn't feel anything. The question is whether it is the neural tissue itself or an agent acting on it.

Common causes of structural headaches are tension and stress, poor posture, misalignment and, in today's world, the repeated strain of sitting incorrectly at a computer all day.

**Migraines**

Migraines are also fairly common and can be quite incapacitating and complicated. With migraines there is a bio-chemical component involved in addition to which, neurological and bio-mechanical factors can be part of the profile. Hormonal contributions are not infrequent.
Head trauma

Then, there is simply hitting your head and ending up with a painful bump. More serious are concussions and damage to the brain or its circulatory system, all of which must be checked medically.

_**Remember, headaches and migraines can be an indication of a serious problem. You MUST seek medical help if you have any doubt as to the nature of your pain.**_

If you would like to know more about when to seek medical advice for headaches, book a complementary meet and greet with Robert or one of our health coaches.

**About the Author**

**Robert Black** is a registered health care practitioner who has a deep passion for the study of the human body, its biomechanics, ability and potential.

He has been working in the field of hands-on therapy, posture and movement for over 20 years. Robert has worked in a variety of clinical settings as well as in his own practice and has built up a diverse repertoire of skills and experience that he brings to his work.

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Can underlying energetic blockages and imbalances cause headaches and migraines?

The simple answer is **yes, they are one of the possible triggers or causes.**

Both an excess of energy in the head or a deficiency can lead to pain. This can be the result of an issue within the head itself, or disruption further down the body which obstructs the free flow of energy.

So a blockage in the throat will prevent the flow of energy into and out of the head.

A blockage at the root or 2nd chakra, so in the pelvis or lower abdomen, will affect how much energy can move into the body or be released.

It is not uncommon with our daily lives to become focused in our head. We are continually busy, using our minds nonstop, and often allow little time to decompress and ground ourselves.

This leads to an inability to let go of the stresses of the day, to drain the excess out of our heads and to become grounded.

Almost all of my clients come in needing to open their lower chakras, reconnect to the ground, and to release some of that pent up energy.

This disruption in energy flow may result in many different headache symptoms including a dull ache, a pressure, throbbing or pain spikes.

An energy healer, whether practicing Reiki, Chakra balancing, Pranic healing, Angel healing, or one of the many other approaches will be able to assist your body to better balance and to effectively bring relief.
During a session they may work at your head or any other part of the body, with their hands lightly on your body, or held just above.

If there is an excess or stagnation of energy in the head there is little benefit to treating the head. What is needed is to open up the channels throughout the body so that the energy can move and the pressure in the head can be released.

They may also bring about longer term healing by addressing the underlying reasons for your energy imbalance. This can be by releasing trapped emotions or by bringing you more into balance so you are no longer as reactive to daily stresses.

Clients who receive energy healing usually report that they feel better in many ways emotionally and physically.

Dispelling some energy myths..

Energy is not some mystical, magical element. Science shows that it exists all around us; energy and matter are interchangeable and that everything is connected energetically. Science also shows that the human body clearly has an energetic component. It is possible to produce an image of the body’s aura, and to scientifically identify acupuncture points, however we do not currently have the science to show what these points are or what they do.

There are many healing approaches worldwide that address imbalance or blockages in our energy, many of which are very ancient.

When channelling energy the healer is tapping into the universal energy that is all around us. There have been scientific studies that show the healer is affecting energy when a healing is taking place.

The book “The energy healing experiments” by Dr Gary Schwartz details some of these studies.

About the Author

Sue Taylor is co-founder and Clinic Director at Ottawa Holistic Wellness. She works as a Natural Allergist and Energy Healer. Her passion is to work with clients to find the root cause of their health concerns, then offering ways in which to resolve these causes.

She will support you through any necessary changes and help you to regain your life!

To find out more about your health and how we can help you, come for a complementary, no-obligation consultation with one of our experienced health coaches.

BOOK NOW
Migraines are debilitating as any sufferer will tell you!

The pain stops life: no engaging with family or friends, no work and no simple pleasures in life. The only refuge once a migraine attacks is a dark, quiet room. Hopefully, sleep brings relief.

There has been a 50% increase in the occurrence of migraines in the last 20 years. This is both alarming and hopeful. Why hopeful? Because if the increase in people suffering with migraines has increased recently, this means with proper care, the number can decrease.

Migraines, like any chronic illness, have a number of triggers. To find relief from migraine headaches, it is essential understand the patterns that trigger the headaches.

Once the pattern is understood and the triggers discovered, herbs, dietary and lifestyle changes can be used to reduce the number and the severity of the migraines, quite possibly eliminate them all together.

Understand the patterns of your migraines.

To begin to understand the patterns of the migraine headache ask the following questions:

- Are the headaches associated with certain foods, stress, lack of sleep, fluorescent lights, alcohol or premenstrual hormonal flux?
- Do migraines run in the family?
- Are they associated with weather changes?
- What is the mood of the person experiencing the headaches?
- What is their personality?
- What events lead up to the headache?
- How is the pain eased?
Try to keep a record of the events surrounding each headache to help you reveal the headaches’ pattern and possible causes.

**Making changes to relieve your migraines**

Frequently, dietary changes are necessary to relieve migraines. The primary food culprits of migraines are chocolate, aged cheese and red wine, processed meats containing nitrates and foods containing monosodium glutamate (MSG). Many find white sugar will bring on a migraine, even a day or two after it has been consumed.

One person I know wakes with a migraine if she eats a banana before bed. Other foods associated with migraines are avocados, tomatoes, dairy products and canned fish.

Stress, or pushing yourself to accomplish too many things, for a prolonged time (or during a difficult period in your life) contributes to the frequency of migraine headaches.

Often it requires two or more triggers to come together to ignite migraine’s pain. For example: you have been pushing yourself all day to meet a deadline and at the evening you drink some red wine to ease your tension. The two triggers combine produces the migraine.

**Exercise to help you avoid migraines.**

Regular exercise can reduce the numbers and severity of migraines. Current research suggests fluctuating serotonin levels are a contributing factor to migraine pain.

Exercise increases and helps the body maintain serotonin levels. Exercise that is non-competitive and focuses on releasing tension is the most effective, for example gentle yoga or Tai chi.

**Herbs to relieve your headaches**

When choosing herbs to relieve migraines it is important to keep in mind that there is not a specific herb, or group of herbs, that will always bring relief.

If using herbs holistically, it is important to support the person in achieving balance of body / mind and not just use symptom relief for the migraines.

Symptom relief is an essential part of a health plan until the body / mind has shifted and balance has been restored.
There are a few general guidelines in using herbal medicine to reduce or overcome migraine headaches.

**Cleansing**

The first step in limiting the number and severity of migraines is gentle cleansing.

Herbs like dandelion root and leaf (*Taraxacum officinalis*) remove toxins from the body via the liver without the headache, nausea and fatigue associated with aggressive cleanses.

Dandelion will cool down the heat many experience with migraine heads and ease any nausea or stomach upset.

**Stress and tension**

If the migraine is associated with excess tension the herbal apothecary has much to offer.

- Sculcap (*Scutellaria laterfolia*) quietens an overactive mind.
- Lobelia (*Lobelia inflate*) relaxes muscular tension and deepens breathing.
- Oats (*Avena sativa*) soothe frayed nerves.
- Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*) settles an anxious heart while cooling down an overheated liver.

A combination of these herbs can bring on the relaxation necessary to ward off a migraine.

- Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*) eases the sensitive stomach often associated with migraines.
Hormonal headaches

If the migraines are premenstrual, herbs that help balance the sex hormones are essential. The queen of these herbs is vitex (Vitex angus-castus). Vitex, formerly known as chasteberry, was used to depress the libido of monks in the middle ages. Now it is the most commonly used herb to relieve menstrual irregularities, including PMS with migraines. Adding vitex to the above formula along with dietary changes and regular exercise can decrease the frequency and intensity of migraine headaches.

And, finally, a change in focus!

The final key to relieving migraines is an attitude change.

The serenity prayer, is a powerful medicine for those who suffer with migraines. It goes like this:

Grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Find out more about herbal medicine and how it can help you.

About the Author

Abrah Arneson has over 10 years experience as a herbalist, and additional training in iridology, Bach Flower essences, and is a Reiki Master. She has taught plant medicine and is author of 2 books. Believing that when we are heard and understood by someone concerned for our wellbeing, the possibility of wellness opens naturally, she listens deeply to her clients’ concerns before offering recommendations particular to each individual’s needs.