



London Wellness

EXPERT CHIROPRACTIC & PHYSIOTHERAPY CARE

MOVE WITH CONFIDENCE

A chiropractor's guide to:

HEADACHES AND MIGRAINES

About the Author

LAWRENCE HARVEY



Lawrence graduated from the Welsh Institute of Chiropractic (WIOC). After this, he moved to London and began practicing in west London, but he is now based in Marylebone and Monument. He is passionate about postural correction and musculoskeletal rehabilitation. He encourages his patients to lead a healthier lifestyle through exercises which have been individually tailored to them.

Lawrence is a registered member of the General Chiropractic Council (GCC) and a member of the British Chiropractic Association (BCA). In 2023 he became a Licentiate of the Royal College of Chiropractors (LRCC).

Lawrence has a biomechanical approach to chiropractic treatment and uses adjustments, soft tissue techniques, exercise and advice to fix the root cause of his patient's pain. He also believes in patient focused care, which focuses on the patient's goals, allowing them to have an active role in their own treatment. He is very comfortable treating patients of all ages and physical ability, including during pregnancy.

Out side of chiropractic Lawrence enjoys functional training in the gym, and he has a passion for cooking and baking.



Reviews



Lawrence is amazing! He always has me giggling through my appointments and is helping keep my headaches and migraines at bay. **Isobel Ellis**

Lawrence is attentive, kind and always listens to what the problem is. He always takes time to explain what he is doing and makes sure that the plans/treatments are patient centred. Lawrence has helped so much, in particular with my posture and reducing tension headaches. He is so lovely and I would highly recommend him, thanks Lawrence! **Verity Scourfield**

Lawrence is an exceptional chiropractor. His expertise and personalised care have made a significant impact on my well-being. The clinic is clean, staff is friendly, and scheduling is hassle-free. I highly recommend Lawrence for anyone seeking top-notch chiropractic care. Grateful for the positive changes he's brought to my health! **Alba Mendoza**

[Book here](#)

A chiropractor's guide to: Headaches and Migraines

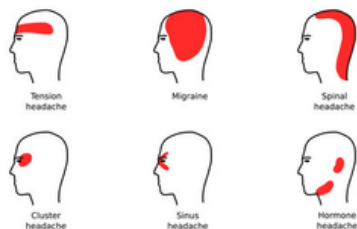
Headaches and migraines affect millions of people. NHS England believe that 10 million people live with migraines (15% of the UK population) and that it is the second leading cause of years lived with disability. [1]

Tension type headaches and migraines are the most common types of primary headaches (the headache itself being the main cause of pain), and cervicogenic headaches are among the most common type of secondary headache (pain is a symptom being triggered by something else). [2]

Cervicogenic headaches are referred pain from structures within the neck such as spinal joints and muscles which are innervated by the C1, C2, C3 spinal nerves [3]. Common causes included: poor posture, repetitive movements, sports injury and trauma.

Other common headaches that you may have come across are sinus, and cluster headaches.

Types of **headaches**

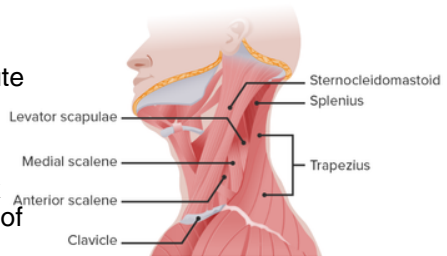


While headaches can be a symptom of various conditions, migraines are considered a specific neurological disorder characterised by intense pain which can be accompanied by nausea, vomiting, aura, and sensitivity to light and sound. The exact cause of migraines is not fully understood, but common triggers include stress, hormonal change, particular foods and sensory stimuli.

Relevant Anatomy

The anatomy of the head and neck is intricately connected to the development and experience of headaches. Key structures include the vertebral bones within the neck, the muscles which surround them, as well as the spinal nerves which leave the spinal cord via small openings in the joint spaces of the vertebrae, and then go on to supply the head, neck and arms.

Muscles such as the temporalis, frontalis, and those in the neck, including the trapezius and sternocleidomastoid, and suboccipital muscles can contribute to tension-type headaches when strained. If your headaches are accompanied by tightness and stiffness in the shoulder and neck muscles they might be the cause of your pain.



The cervical spine (neck) has 7 bones which stack on top of each other and allow the head to move freely from side to side as well as up and down. The upper cervical vertebrae (C1, C2, C3) and their associated nerves, can refer pain into the head as well as referral pain down the neck and into the arms causes headaches and referral pain down the arms. For this reason, it's important to ensure that the bones within the neck can move freely and with ease, so that they don't cause pain.



Dysfunction or irritation of these anatomical components, whether through stress, poor posture, or injury, can lead to different types of headaches, ranging from tension headaches to migraines and cluster headaches. This is why it is important to undergo a consultation before any treatment so that your practitioner knows the cause of your pain and then can effectively treat the relevant structures.

The role of Chiropractic in relation to headaches and migraines, and what to expect during a chiropractic session

Manual therapy has been found to be commonly utilized when dealing with headaches and migraines [4].

Chiropractors specialize in diagnosis and treatment of musculoskeletal disorders, particularly those related to the spine. One way chiropractors help those with headaches and migraines is through using manual therapy, this includes spinal manipulation. These manipulations are precise and specific forces applied to the spine which aim to correct and ease the movement of the spinal joints and the muscles around them, relieving tension and irritation within these structures and overall improve their function.

In addition to spinal adjustments, chiropractors will often incorporate other therapies to address the factors causing headaches and migraines. These may include:

- Soft tissue techniques, to help relieve muscular tension around the neck.
- Nutritional advice, to help identify any patient triggers (e.g. chocolate, blue cheese).
- Lifestyle & Ergonomic advice, such as postural correction, and workstation setup.
- Stress management, stress should be correctly managed in order to help those with headaches and migraines, as it is a common trigger and cause of pain.
- Exercise therapy, by strengthening the neck and providing more support for the spinal joints it is possible to reduce pain.

Studies have found that chiropractic care helps to reduce pain and frequency of cervicogenic headaches [5]. Chiropractic also affects the physical conditions related to stress and in these patients the effects of tension type headaches and migraines are reduced [6].

The most important thing about seeking help from a chiropractor is that you have an individualised treatment package which may include manual therapies, exercise and lifestyle advice, and cognitive behaviour interventions [7]. The Royal College of Chiropractors has stated that “Patients with headaches are managed according to their headache type but should expect to be treated with an individualised package of care” [7].

Self-care tips for Headaches and Migraines

Here are some types to help reduce and avoid headaches/migraines:



1. Stay Hydrated

Dehydration can often cause headaches, so drinking plenty of water can prevent or alleviate them. Aim for at least 8 glasses of water a day.

2. Rest in a Dark, Quiet Room

Bright lights and loud noises can exacerbate headaches. Find a quiet, dark place to relax, close your eyes, and rest for a while.

3. Cold or Warm Compress

- For tension headaches, use a *warm compress* on your neck or shoulders can help relax tight muscles.

- For migraines, use a *cold compress* on the forehead or temples may reduce throbbing pain, as the cold helps to slow down the inflammatory process.

4. Maintain Good Posture

Poor posture, especially during work or while using devices, can strain your neck and cause headaches. Make sure to ask your chiropractor about how to make your workspace ergonomically friendly.

Also, it is important to regularly stretch your neck, shoulders, and back throughout the day, as sitting in one position for too long can cause muscle tension.

6. Reducing Caffeine

Too much caffeine can trigger headaches or cause withdrawal headaches if used regularly, so make sure you manage your intake

7. Take a Break from Screens

Staring at screens for long periods can cause eye strain and lead to headaches. Use the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.

8. Regular Sleep

Lack of sleep or irregular sleep patterns can trigger headaches. Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per night and maintain a regular sleep schedule.



When to reach out: Important Health signs [8]

Whilst experiencing headaches If you experience any of the following, please seek appropriate medical attention or contact 111:

A severe headache accompanied by:

- jaw pain when eating
- blurred or double vision
- other symptoms, such as numbness or weakness in the arms or legs

Contact 999 or go to A&E if:

- If you've experienced a head injury
- The headache came on suddenly and is extremely painful.
- If a very extremely painful headache is accompanied with any of the following symptoms: a loss of vision, feeling drowsy, a very high temperature, a problem speaking or remembering things.

1. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/rightcare/toolkits/headache-and-migraine-toolkit/>
2. <https://stanfordhealthcare.org/medical-conditions/brain-and-nerves/headache/types.html#:~:text=A%20primary%20headache%20is%20when,the%20headaches%20are%20not%20dangerous.>
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK507862/>
4. [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3627391/#:~:text=Table%20File%201.-,Prevalence%20of%20CAM%20Use,0.0001\)%20\(Table%202\).](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3627391/#:~:text=Table%20File%201.-,Prevalence%20of%20CAM%20Use,0.0001)%20(Table%202).)
5. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9200048/>
6. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10714533/>
7. <https://rcc-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Headache-Quality-Standard-Web.pdf>
8. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/headaches/>