

HEADING OFF HEADACHES

Except for head colds, headaches are the most common human illness. In fact, headaches beat out backaches as the number one cause of time lost from work. Approximately three out of every four people will have at least one headache within the year.

Some headaches, like migraines, are caused by disturbances of neurotransmitters. However, according to Dr. Janet Travell and Dr David Simmons, specialists in musculoskeletal pain, *“It is now becoming clear that tension headache is usually due to trigger points.”*

Trigger points are the small knots that develop in muscles. These knots or mini-spasms, make pain travel to different areas of the body, often nowhere near the knot itself. For example, trigger points at the top of your neck can send pain directly into your eye. The name trigger point comes from the fact that these knots can sit in your muscles for ages without causing pain until something triggers them to become active. Common trigger include fatigue, stress, poor posture, repetitive movements at work, and cold drafts.

It takes an educated and skilled therapist to locate and eliminate the trigger points. Massage therapy is a proven way of treating trigger points for long term headache relief. In one study, researchers found that chronic headache sufferers had dramatic relief after ten massages that focused on treatment of trigger points. However, specific types of massage techniques must be used. A simple relaxation massage won't do the job. Although you may get some relief with general relaxation massage. Long term relief depends on correctly identifying and treating specific trigger points which are responsible for your pain. Single muscle trigger points can often be eliminated quickly and easily, sometimes within one or two treatments. When many muscles are involved and certain perpetuating factors are present, it may take significant time and your active participation to get lasting results.

WHEN SHOULD YOU SEE A DOCTOR?

In a small number of cases, severe headaches may be a warning sign of a more serious disorder, such as very high blood pressure, stroke, bleeding in the brain, or even a tumor. The following signs should send you to the doctor right away:

You suddenly start having severe headaches, especially if they're your first ones and you are over 35. You have a severe headache during or immediately after physical exertion or straining. Some activities may lead to “exertion headaches”, which are fairly common and usually harmless. But to rule out internal head injury, it's prudent to see a doctor.

A HEADACHE WITH FEVER AND STIFF NECK

A headache accompanied by confusion or difficulty speaking—especially following a blow to the head, even one that occurred several weeks earlier.

A headache accompanied by inflamed, clogged sinuses. Occasionally a severe headache results from infection and build-up of pus in the sinus passages.

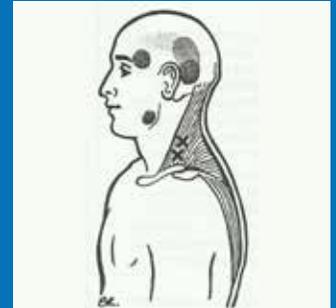
Any increases in the intensity or frequency of headaches.

YOUR HEADACHE TREATMENT GUIDE

Most people go into the medicine cabinet when they have a headache. Most common headache medication are sold over the counter. These include aspirin, ibuprofen (which is sold under the brand name Advil) and acetaminophen (sold as Tylenol). Remember that just because these drugs are sold over the counter does not mean they are harmless. You should not take pain killers for long periods of time without consulting with your doctor. If these are ineffective your doctor may prescribe medication for you. Most prescription drugs have unpleasant and sometimes dangerous side effects, so it's always best to rely on non-drug treatments when possible. Here are a few possibilities you may want to look into:

RELAXATION TRAINING

Relaxation has been shown to be extremely effective in the management of headaches. For example, one study published in the journal *Headache* in 1989 found that migraine sufferers who were taught relaxation exercises had 30% to 40% fewer attacks over the course of three years. The subjects were also better able to cope with the attacks when they occurred and required less medication. The problem, with relaxation is that people generally try to relax only when they are really tense. It's very hard to relax when you're really tense because your stress hormones have already flooded your system and your nervous system is running in high gear. Relaxation is a learned skill—to be effective it has to be practiced before you get tense



Trigger points (small muscle knots) in the shoulder muscles (x's) cause pain to radiate into the areas shown in the illustration: the base of the skull, the temple, and sometimes the jaw.

“ Migraine sufferers who were taught relaxation exercise had 30% - 40% fewer attacks. ”

COLD

Reusable gel packs are an inexpensive and simple solution that can be used in place of or as an adjunct to medication. Keep the gel pack in the freezer. At the first sign of a headache, put it in a tea towel and wrap it around your neck. About 70% of headache sufferers will experience some relief with the use of gel packs. If your headache gets worse after applying the pack, it is possible that the cold pack may be aggravating a trigger point.

HEAT

Some people find that heat is better than cold at relieving headaches. Most gel packs can also be heated. They are generally safer and more effective than heating pads because they mold nicely to the shape of your neck and they seldom get too hot. A hot bath or hot shower may even be better. Headaches caused by trigger points generally respond well to heat, whereas migraine headaches may be aggravated.

EXERCISE

Regular exercise helps relieve stress and tension and thus can be an excellent way to prevent headaches. Neck, back, and shoulder stretches also help relieve tension and are essential if the headache is caused by a trigger point. Ask your massage therapist for stretches that are appropriate for you [refer to illustration].

IMPROVED POSTURE

Sitting improperly, at a computer terminal for instance, can create tension, strain and trigger a headache. Slouching is particularly problematic as it prevents you from breathing normally and shortens the muscles in the back of your neck.

GET TO THE CAUSE.

A headache may be your body's way of telling you that there is some underlying stressful problem

in your life: a troubled relationship, an unfulfilling job, or an upcoming exam. Your headaches may go away only when these stressful situations are resolved.

MASSAGE

This one of our favorite, simply because we know it works so well. Many people think that massage provides only short term relief. However, research shows that not only is massage effective at eliminating headaches, but the relief can last for months. Part of the effectiveness lies in the elimination of trigger points. As well regular massage can actually retrain your nervous system to decrease the tension in your muscles on a more permanent basis.

**For an appointment or more
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Baldvin has been working as a massage therapist for over 15 years. During such time, he has had the amazing opportunity to take such extensive courses such as myofascial release, sports massage, deep muscle tissue therapy and stretching, cranial sacral massage, and TMJ treatments. He continues to actively learn new techniques through such continuing education programs.



SPORTS

Sports Massage Therapy is used by athletes, both professional and amateur, as part of their regular physical routine. Our registered massage therapists understand the importance of sports rehabilitation and can assist you in the path to recovery, through exercise and rehabilitation exercises.

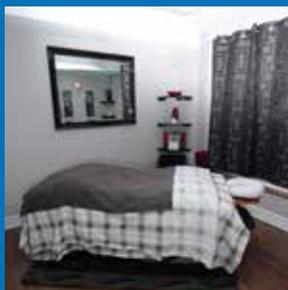
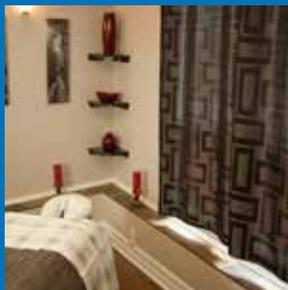
Therapeutic Massage therapists assists athletes of all ages in preventing injury and enhancing recovery with regular massage visits. They have handled stress and strain and accidental injuries to help correct muscular imbalances, overuse injuries, and any postural issues occurring.

OPTIMIZE HEALTH

Massage therapy treatment has a therapeutic effect on the body and optimizes health and well-being by acting on the muscular, nervous and circulatory systems. Physical function can be developed, maintained and improved; and physical dysfunction and pain and the effects of stress can be relieved or prevented through the use of massage therapy.

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

There are tremendous benefits to be achieved through regular massage therapy treatments from a registered massage therapist. Whether your need is to have a moment of relaxation, reduce muscle tension or attain relief from chronic pain, a **Therapeutic Massage** can enhance your overall sense of emotional and physical well-being as well as your quality of life.



Come and visit us in our newly renovated massage rooms.

We try to make your visit a time of complete relaxation, with your choice of music to soft lighting.



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MASSAGE FOR ALL AGES

Massage therapy benefits people of all ages. While it benefits the injured, the ill and the stressed, the strength of massage therapy in preventing illness and conditions before they develop cannot be overlooked.

BENEFITS

Therapeutic massage is an important part of your health maintenance plan, by:

- » Reducing or eliminating pain
- » Improving joint mobility
- » Improving circulation
- » Improving immune system functioning
- » Increasing lymphatic drainage
- » Reducing depression and anxiety
- » Reducing tension within muscles
- » Increasing body awareness

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