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Chapter 7

Auto Accidents and Headaches

“Why does one get headaches after an accident?”

In my practice as a licensed massage therapist and certified neuromuscular therapist I have treated many patients who had been in auto accidents and subsequently began to experience headaches. From my perspective there are a few reasons why certain traumas, especially auto accidents, can bring on headache pain. Knowing these reasons and some ways to take care of oneself can help one to deal with the pain.

First, though, it is important to check after an accident with a head trauma specialist and/or a doctor. Be wary of taking a lot of pain medications especially if there has been no diagnosis.

Also be aware that sometimes after experiencing any kind of trauma one will have what is considered Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The stress from this alone can bring on headaches. Who's to say which comes first, the PTSD or the headaches, but the interplay with the symptoms associated with stress, (such as clenched jaws and disturbed or irregular sleep) can further add to the tendency for getting headaches.

There are 2 main muscles that play a part in all this after an accident. Knowing how to treat them may help to bring some relief. Looking at an anatomy book to identify these muscles will help.

1. *The Sternocleidomastoid Muscle (fondly referred to as the “SCM”)*

This muscle runs from behind the earlobe, diagonally across the front of the neck into the sternum. Find it by lying on the back and lifting the head up or by turning the head to the side. The SCM prevents the head from jilting by tightening up. Afterwards the muscle can go into spasm by becoming hypertonic (tight) and because of this, will be prone to weakness. This muscle has many trigger points alongside it that can contribute to headache pain.

To massage the SCM: first move the head towards the side that will be worked on. This prevents one from grabbing anything but the muscle itself. With the thumb and pointer finger, squeeze up and down the muscle. Hold any tender points a little longer as they are probably either trigger points or spasms. Breathe deeply. Repeat on the other side. See “Self Massage 16” in Chapter 11.

Range of motion stretch: stretch this muscle by turning the head to a 45 degree angle and bringing the chin to the chest. Then bring it back to a frontal position and tilt it backwards as far as possible without strain, just a good stretch. Add more stretch to this by jutting out the jaw a couple of times while it is in the backward position. Do this about 5 times to each side. See “Stretch 6” in Chapter 10.

2. *Upper Trapezius Muscle*

This muscle runs along the top of the shoulder up into the ridge between the bottom of the side of the head and neck. This is where it originates and can be extremely tight and/or painful in this area in particular. This muscle also has many trigger points that run along it and contribute to headache pain.

Chapter 8

Aromatherapy and Headaches

“What is aromatherapy and how can it help headaches?”

Aromatherapy has an almost immediate effect on the nervous system. Therefore, it is an excellent preventative means for stress and tension management, major contributors to headaches. Essential oils also have anti-microbial, pain-relieving and immune-strengthening qualities which provide cellular healing. They interact with the limbic brain, effecting the hormone and nervous systems.

Make sure that the essential oils being used are 100% essential. This simply means that they are pure and will have strong therapeutic benefits. Today I have found that most 100% essential oils say it very clearly on their labels.

The most frequently used oils for headache pain include:

- Peppermint
- Lavender
- Helichrysum
- Grapefruit
- Rose
- Basil
- Sage
- Coriander
- Rosemary
- Ginger
- Melissa
- Eucalyptus
- Marjoram
- Chamomile
- Wintergreen
- Neroli
- Valerian
- Camphor

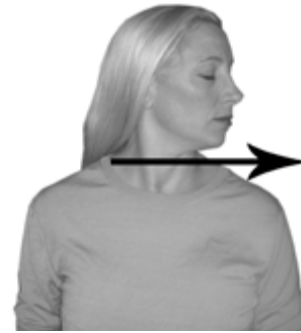
Here are some tips on the use of essential oils:

- For a headache with eyestrain, try a cool compress with a mixture of chamomile, parsley and/or rosemary on the forehead and lie down for about 20 minutes.
- Try putting an essential oil in a soft cloth and inhaling throughout the day.
- For a sinus-related headache, try putting peppermint, eucalyptus, ginger and/or wintergreen in the cloth.
- For tension-related headaches, take a warm bath with a couple of drops of a favorite oil that helps with stress (such as lavender) and soak for about 20 minutes.
- For a vascular headache, use two compresses: put calming oil in a cool cloth on the face or neck and put another one in a warm foot soak for about 20 minutes.
- Take a favorite oil and use in a diffuser or aroma lamp, or try putting a couple of drops in a bowl with boiling water in it, put a towel over the head and the bowl and breathe deeply for a few minutes.

In order to get the full healing properties of essential oils, use oils that have been extracted by natural means, not an industrial solvent. To check essential oils try putting a drop into water and if it looks creamy it may be a synthetic. Or put a drop on paper and if it has a grease stain after 2-3 hours it may be diluted. Essential oils are potent, so be sure to:

- Keep a bottle of pure vegetable oil close by to dilute if they cause irritation to the skin.
- Make sure to keep essential oils away from children.
- Keep oils capped tightly, upright and in a dark place.
- Do not get oils close to the eyes or put in the ears.

Stretch 4 - Move the head to the right, slowly, looking over the shoulder, hold for a few seconds, then move the head, in a smooth motion, to the left, looking over the opposite shoulder. Keep the shoulders down. Move back and forth in slow, deliberate movements. Stretch to each side 5 times.



Stretch 5 - Put the chin down to the chest, then slowly lift the head all the way back, looking up towards the ceiling. While the head is in this position, jut the chin out 2 times. Bring the head back to frontal position and then repeat this whole stretch, jutting the chin out 2 times. Bring the head back to position.



Stretch 6 - Repeat the previous stretch, only this time move the head sideways to a 45 degree angle. Put the chin down then bring it back up (staying at a 45 degree angle) and once again jut the jaw out and back 2 times, then repeat this whole stretch. Keep the shoulders down and move the head back into a forward position before moving to the other side. Once again move the head to the other sideways 45 degree angle position, chin down at first then pull head back, keeping this same angle, jut the jaw out 2 times and repeat the whole stretch on this same side.



Chapter 11

Self Massage

Learn how to treat the muscles that contribute to headaches.

Before Beginning:

This group of self massage techniques will help to specifically break down muscle spasms, release toxins and reduce scar tissue. They also help to stimulate blood and lymphatic flow within the muscles. This all leads to a lessening of the frequency, duration or intensity of headache pain.

Once again, sit comfortably in a chair with your feet flat on the floor and breathe deeply.

Massage 1 - Use the hands like a tool in a claw-like fashion to scrub the head, loosening up the scalp. If there is a painful area, press into it, staying with pressure that is comfortable. On a scale of 1-10, utilizing an approximate "7" has the most therapeutic benefit. Press into a painful area until it lessens, or try holding it for ten seconds, then repeat two more times.



Massage 2 - Use 2 or 3 fingers to go around in little circles, pressing firmly into the scalp. If painful spots are detected, press into those spots as instructed in Massage One. These first 3 massages are included to loosen the scalp. A tight scalp can either start headache symptoms or it can be a result of headaches.



“Third Eye Point”

Press right between the eyebrow where the forehead and top of nose meet.



“Gates of Consciousness”

Press below the bone of the bottom of the skull where there is a hollow on both sides of the neck, about 2 to 3 inches apart.



“One Hundred Meeting Point”

Press into where you feel a hollow on the crown of the head. Find it by going straight up from the back of both ears to the top of the head.



#46-Put a cold compress or a frozen gel pack to the back of the neck, forehead, jaw area or even the top of the head. Leave on for 15 to 20 minutes. Wait at least an hour before applying again.

#52-Ayurvedic medicine addresses different remedies for headaches based on the type of headache. It categorizes them based on the “dosha” under which it falls. There are some great books, information on the internet and ways to get in touch with a local practitioner.

#53-Taking a melatonin supplement has been found to significantly decrease the amount of migraines one endures. It is suggested to take 3 milligrams before going to bed.

#54-Consult with a health care practitioner first, but try taking 200 milligrams of riboflavin 2 times per day, especially if experiencing migraines.

#55-Again, consult with a health care practitioner first; try taking 75 mg butterbur 2 times per day; it is especially helpful with migraines.

#56-If taking medications, ask a health care practitioner if they may be contributing to headache pain. This can be especially true if they have been taken for a long period of time or if they have been overused.

#57-Some people have experienced a reduction of pain by using magnets. I say it is worth a try. If it does not help, it will not harm. On the internet, you can read up on the use of magnets.

#58-Most chiropractors use transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) units which basically contracts the muscles, then releases them. This can relax the headache-associated muscles, reducing headache pain.

#59-Exercising aerobically in fresh air, provided it is not too humid outside, can help ease headache pain.

#60-Some of my patients have told me that if they sit in a dark space for about 20 minutes it helps to decrease some of the pain. This is probably because it reduces tension, but it may help if the headache is related to eyestrain.

#61-Adopt a homeless animal. Petting and caring for an animal has been proven to diminish stress which helps in reducing muscle tension that may lead to headaches and helps you to feel better about yourself. Hint: There are many organizations that are helpful in connecting people to the right pet for them!

#62-If wanting to explore the potential of a spiritual connection with your headaches, call Frannie Hoffman to set up a consultation. Phone sessions are always available (and just as effective) if you are not in this area. The number to dial is 941-782-0770 or go to www.franniehoffman.com.