



## Neck Pain & Headaches

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Headaches have long been attributed to vascular spasm, stress, sinus congestion, etc. New research, out of Australia, is confirming what physiotherapists have known for years. Headaches often are a result of neck problems!

These type of headaches usually begin at the base of the skull and if particularly bad can progress up the back of the head ending above the eye. Also they sometimes produce a band-like pain in the distribution of a laurel wreath. Nausea and dizziness may accompany these headaches.

The headache often comes from the small joints in the neck as a result of an injury or poor posture. This results in an irritation of the joints and thus pain. If you ignore the pain in the neck, then the irritation increases until it produces a headache.

What can you do to prevent these headaches? The most important factor is your posture. The earlobe should be centered over your shoulder. Look around and see where most people hold their head. Then get a picture of yourself that shows your head and neck in profile. This will give you a good idea of your natural head position.

The next time you feel an aching in your neck or the start of a headache try the following:

- Change position. Sit up straight or go for a walk.
- Try to bring your ear to center over your shoulder. This may take some practice as you may be quite stiff in this position.
- A therapist who specializes in neck care can guide you into proper exercises that will help you correct your posture.
- Techniques that emphasize posture such as the Alexander method and Mitzvah technique may help you to become more aware of your postural habits.
- The use of a back support in sitting i.e. a lumbar roll or a special chair may be of benefit.
- A good book on posture and care of the neck has been written by R. McKenzie, *Treat Your Own Neck*.