

## ***Headaches***

In today's society with increasingly sedentary lifestyles, computer use and poor postural tone, we are commonly seeing people who are suffering from what we term ***cervicogenic*** headaches.

Cervicogenic headaches simply mean headaches that stem from the cervical spine. These are the most common form of headache and are largely felt in the base of the head, sometimes behind the eyes and temple region. Less commonly they can be felt on the top of the head, forehead and behind the ear. The pain is usually felt on one side, however both sides of the head and face may be affected.

Causes of cervicogenic headaches are largely related to our postures and the stress they cause to the top three vertebrae of the neck and the tissues surrounding them. Stretching and compression forces that are placed on the joints, muscles, ligaments and nerves of the neck may cause damage if the forces are beyond what the tissues can withstand. This stress can be placed on the neck structures gradually over time, or they may be as a result of one specific incident, such as whiplash during a car or sporting accident.

The nerves that supply the upper neck also supply the skin overlying the head, forehead, jaw line, back of the eyes and ears. As a result, the damage and pain arising from the structures in the top of neck may also refer pain to these regions, causing a headache.

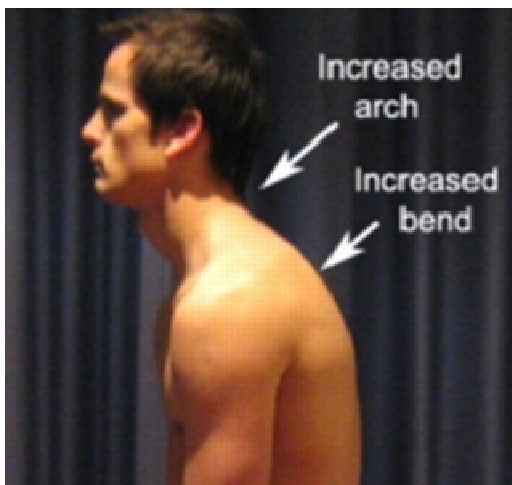
The main contributing factors that can cause cervicogenic headaches are:

- Prolonged slouching
- Poor posture
- Excessive bending or twisting of the neck
- Whiplash injuries
- Neck and upper back stiffness
- Muscle imbalances, weakness and tightness
- Inappropriate desk setup
- Inappropriate pillow or sleeping postures
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Stress

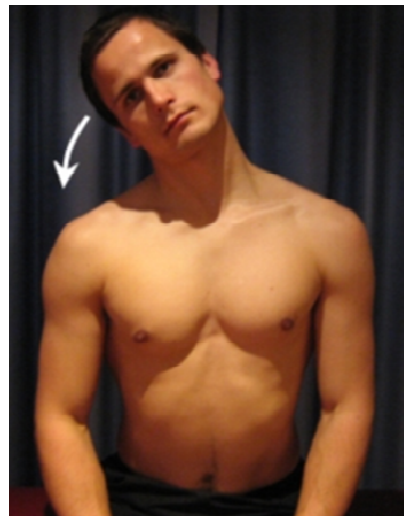


Treatment of cervicogenic headaches includes the assessment of the joints throughout the neck, upper back and the muscle length, and tension of the neck and shoulder muscles. Your therapist will also assess your posture and the muscle balance between the important postural muscles around your neck, shoulders and lower back.

A range of techniques can be used to help decrease muscle tension and improve joint motion such as joint mobilisation and manipulation, deep tissue massage, trigger point therapy and acupuncture. Your therapist may also use supportive taping to help improve your posture and help to decrease muscle tension in the initial stages.



*Poor sitting postures are associated with causing cervicogenic headaches*



*Stretches for the neck will be prescribed during your treatment.*

In the long term, exercises should be prescribed to help improve your postural muscle tone which may include your therapist suggesting you participate in Clinical Pilates to incorporate stretching and strengthening of these areas.

If you think you may be suffering from cervicogenic headaches, do not ignore these symptoms, as with time they will only get worse. Contact our clinic today and let one of our therapist's assess and begin your pathway to a headache free lifestyle!