



**Ask  
Dr. Michael  
The Pain Expert**



Dr. Michael Clifford

**Cervicogenic Headache**

*When I work on the computer my neck becomes stiff and painful and I get a bad headache. What can I do to relieve the pain and prevent more headaches? Margaret O.*

The kind of headache that you are experiencing is called a cervicogenic headache. One of the most common types of headache it actually originates in the neck, where a traumatic event such as whiplash, or repetitive or prolonged activities such as work on a computer, housework or even slouching has caused damage to the cervical joints, muscles, ligaments or nerves of the first three vertebra. This damage produces pain signals which are referred to the head, causing headaches which can last from a couple of hours to two days, and as often as several times a week. In addition, myofascial trigger points, TMJ Syndrome, and muscle tension can also contribute to cervicogenic headaches, and emotional stress, fatigue, noise and glare can be aggravating factors.

**Symptoms of Cervicogenic Headache**

Cervical headache is usually experienced as a constant dull ache at the back of the head, but can also be felt as pain in the temples, behind the eyes, on top of the head, forehead or ear region, or may encircle the entire head. Neck pain, stiffness and difficulty turning the neck is also common, and less commonly pain, pins and needles, or numbness may also be felt in the upper back, shoulders, arms or hands.

**Treatment for Cervicogenic Headache**

Specific chiropractic adjustments of cervical and upper thoracic vertebrae have been shown to be the most effective treatment for cervicogenic headache. These adjustments correct the cervical joint dysfunction and subluxations, relieving the nerve compression, inflammation and muscles tension which are producing the pain. In addition, trigger point therapy, TMJ therapy, ultrasound, and deep massage are recommended adjunctive treatments, as well as stress reduction, exercise and rest. This multi-faceted approach has been shown to be the most highly effective treatment for both relieving and preventing the recurrence of cervicogenic headaches. Most types of headache, including migraine and tension headaches, have been found to have a cervicogenic component, and these treatment guidelines should be considered in these cases as well.

Dr. Michael Clifford is a U.S. Board Certified Chiropractic Physician, Physiotherapist and Chiropractic Sports Physician, and founder of *Haven Chiropractic Advanced Pain Relief and Family Wellness Care*. Galways Lane, Douglas, Cork. [havenchiropractic@aol.com](mailto:havenchiropractic@aol.com) [www.havenchiropractic.ie](http://www.havenchiropractic.ie).

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