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Migraine Headaches

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Headaches come in many forms and can range from minor discomfort and pressure to debilitating pain with nausea with vomiting. The different causes for headaches are almost as vast as the people who suffer from them. Migraine headaches are a particularly severe type of headache and afflict an estimated 30 million people across North America.

Migraine headaches are characteristically more common in females. Symptoms include but are not limited to pain, (usually on one side of the head / face), visual disturbances, nausea, vomiting, light headedness and a hypersensitivity to normal stimuli such as light and noise. The sufferer usually finds relief from lying in a quiet darkened room and sleeping. Migraine headaches are sometimes preceded by an aura in which the person can predict a migraine coming on because of a certain feeling or visual pattern.

The triggers for migraines vary widely and may include stress, physical exertion, food allergies or hormonal response. Recent studies show that smoking can also be a major factor due to its effect on blood vessels. It was once believed that migraines were due entirely to inflamed blood vessels in the head. However, recent research suggests that the majority are neurogenic in nature. This means they are from irritation or inflammation of the nervous system. The trigeminal nerve is the most likely culprit. This nerve, which is related to some of the nerves in the upper neck, can cause muscles and other tissues in the neck and skull to contract putting pressure on arteries in the head. This pressure is what causes the commonly associated throbbing or pulsing sensation. Reactions with the brain then cause normal pain thresholds to decrease and thus the hypersensitivity to normal light and sounds. This connection of the trigeminal nerve with the upper neck often causes referral pain to the neck and shoulders. These referral patterns can mimic symptoms of tension or other types of headaches often complicating the diagnosis. These headaches can vary in duration from a few hours to a few days and relief from symptoms is often impossible.

Chiropractic treatments for migraine headaches consist of aligning the spinal segments in the neck, which in turn relieves pressure on the spinal nerves. With proper nervous flow from the brain to blood vessels and surrounding joints and muscles, symptoms of migraine headache are often resolved or minimized. In addition normalization of the spinal nerves can optimize function and resolve the underlying cause of migraine headaches all together. Headaches and migraine headaches are among the most common reasons a person seeks chiropractic care. Chiropractors offer a safe, effective and natural treatment approach for migraines and every other type of headache. See your Chiropractor soon for a spinal and nervous system evaluation to optimize spinal function and overall health.