

# Got a Headache?

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The body never forgets an injury. Coupled with poor posture and lifestyle habits, each trauma, large or small, can cause tightening in the muscles or stiffness in the joints. In all parts of the body and particularly, in the case of headaches, our neck, upper back and shoulders can be very common spots of origin.

In fact, many physiotherapists are seeing an increasing number of people suffering from cervicogenic headaches, which generate in the neck.

This pain is not only debilitating, but it leads to many lost hours of life including work, recreational activities and time spent with friends and family. Unfortunately, given the modern trend toward sedentary work and repetitive activities, many Manitobans are presently suffering or are at risk of developing cervicogenic headaches.

As we go through life, the flexibility we were born with gradually diminishes. We marvel as we watch babies put their toes into their mouths. With time, however, compounded by injuries, poor sleeping positions, bad posture and said sedentary tendencies, we slowly lose our flexibility.

The same can be said about movement, which for most of us, is gradually reduced as we age.

The good news is that physiotherapists are movement specialists who are able to determine if your headache is coming from the neck. An intake exam that details your history, your posture and current state of movement helps us to hone in on dysfunctional areas in the body to determine the issues.

For instance, if you wake up with a headache, it may be related to joint stiffness, a poor pillow or a contorted sleeping position. A physiotherapist will help you with corrective solutions for sleeping positions but may also be able to work that joint free.

If your headache develops as the day goes on, the cause may be due to tight muscles that grow increasingly tighter from trying to hold the weight of your head in work-related postures or from looking at your electronic device. We tend to work in a head-forward posture, which puts an enormous strain and demand on the discs, muscles and joints of the neck and shoulders. Pain receptors are stimulated and the muscles at the base of the skull tighten up, causing headaches.

Physiotherapists can help to provide ergonomic suggestions and give you strategies to improve your posture. We can teach you soft tissue release techniques for tight muscles and strengthening exercises for weak or lengthened muscles.

If your neck is stiff or sore, and you have headache, then you probably have a cervicogenic headache. While reaching for a bottle of ibuprofen may provide temporary relief, please remember that a physiotherapist can help you discover why you have a headache in the first place, and work with you to relieve some of the causative factors.

To find a physiotherapist, visit [mbphysio.org](http://mbphysio.org) today.

*Murray MacHutchon is a physiotherapist at Pembina Physiotherapy & Sports Injury Clinic. You can find Murray and other great physiotherapists in the Find A Physiotherapist section at [www.mbphysio.org](http://www.mbphysio.org).*

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