

Medically Speaking

Educating and Answering Your Questions



Headache again? – Know your headaches and how to get rid of them!

Information available on the worldwide web indicates that headaches are a leading complaint in outpatient medical care facilities in the US and one of the main reasons for missing work or school. 28 million Americans suffer from migraine headaches – about 13% of our entire population, with about 75% of those being women.

What most people, physicians included, do not realize is that a tremendous number of these headaches are related to the mouth. In my experience, as much as 70-80% of all head pain is directly attributable to problems in the teeth and jaw – and can be readily alleviated with proper dental treatment.

There are different types of headaches that should be recognized and treated accordingly.

Tension Headaches – these are the most common types of headaches with 20-30% of the population experiencing episodes more than once a month. Symptoms are usually presented by steady ache rather than throbbing pain; they also affect both sides of the head.

You might think that the only way to treat a tension headache would be to reduce stress, but that is not always the only answer. Another cause for tension headaches might be a misaligned bite. To evaluate whether the headaches are related to the bite, we can make a custom acrylic appliance that will help to evaluate the origins of a patient's headaches and will often alleviate them greatly.

TMD (Temporomandibular Dysfunction) – formerly known as TMJ syndrome – TMD is simply a dramatic extension of the classic tension headache. Often related to clenching and a misaligned bite, TMD syndrome can cause extreme spasms and trauma to the muscles, not only the jaw, but down into the neck and shoulders. In many cases back muscles are also affected.

Trigeminal Neuralgia (TN) – is marked by sharp pain that usually starts at one side of the mouth and “shoots out” to the lip, gums, cheeks, ear or eye on the affected side. The pain is truly terrible

and can be triggered by touch, movement, eating or even by change in air temperature like a draft of air.

A syndrome similar to TN results in a condition called atypical facial pain. This condition is characterized by a constant, often burning pain, which affects one side of the face and can include discomfort of the head and neck as well.

If I have TMD or migraine problems, how is it corrected? My philosophy is to start with the simple things first. My approach to treatment for the average patient is very conservative. In preparing some recommendations for our patients, I use the philosophy of acupuncture and energy meridians in which I was trained in Europe.

For example – since the site of the TMJ is at the intersection of the three major energy meridians relating to the stomach, endocrine system and small intestine, relief of TMD can spark a tremendous healing process in the whole body, relieving symptoms like stomach problems, chest pains, and cold hands and feet.

A word of caution: Anyone experiencing sudden or chronic head pain should have a physician rule out tumors, high blood pressure, and other underlying issues. If no underlying medical issues are found, before starting with suppressive drug therapy, see a dentist who understands how to take care your headache.

As always, your partner in health,
Dr. Pastouk

Please feel free to email me at dentalhelp@gmail.com any questions or concerns you might have or to let us know health topics you would like us to cover. Stay tuned for a guest doctor in Naturopathic Medicine.



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