

Headaches

The upper neck carries the weight of the head and is responsible for more than 50% of neck range of motion. Stress, poor posture, fatigue, malalignment of the spinal column, disc problems, joint wear and tear, and previous injury or surgery can all add up to dysfunction in this region. The upper neck contains muscles, joints, vessels and nerves that may refer pain to the head, neck and shoulders. Even headaches in the forehead or behind the eyes can start in the neck. Headaches originating from the upper neck are collectively referred to as cervicogenic headaches.

As with most problems, the key is to find the correct diagnosis as quickly as possible. Be aware, however, that diagnosis of a cervicogenic headache can be tricky as there are patterns of pain and dysfunction that cross over with other types of headache classification such as migraines or tension headaches.

An individual suffering from cervicogenic headaches will typically present with decreased range of motion of the neck, postural faults, joint dysfunction in the vertebrae of the neck, and tenderness at the base of the skull. Treatment plans will depend on the specific contributing factors.

The good news is that these types of headaches can be treated. Manual treatment combined with postural exercise gives better results than either manual treatment or exercise alone.