

CERVICOGENIC HEADACHE

WHAT IS A CERVICOGENIC HEADACHE?

A Cervicogenic Headache (CGH) is a headache that originates in the neck. The vertebrae located in the neck are called “cervical vertebrae,” which is why this part of the neck is referred to as the cervical area.

Stress of the neck and/or spine may result in a CGH. There are many possible causes of stress affecting the neck, including injury, whiplash, sleeping problems, poor posture, disc problems, overworked muscles or weak muscles.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF A CERVICOGENIC HEADACHE?

Symptoms may vary per patient and symptoms of a CGH may be similar to other conditions. Symptoms may include tenderness or stiffness of the neck. Patients may experience pain that radiates up from the base of the skull into the head and even the face. Pain may occur above and around the eye, as well as along the trigeminal nerve of the face. Pain may also radiate down into the shoulders and shoulder blades. CGH pain is often focused on one side of the head/neck.

Other symptoms may include dizziness or vomiting, blurred vision, fatigue and/or nausea.

HOW ARE CERVICOGENIC HEADACHES DIAGNOSED?

Your physician will gather an extensive medical history and may then order imaging such as X-rays, CT scans and MRI's to assess your condition. However, some patients may be symptomatic with normal findings, just as some patients may be asymptomatic with abnormal findings. Diagnosing CGH is a process that involves history, test results, and responses to medications and treatment modalities.

WHAT KIND OF TREATMENT IS AVAILABLE?

Treatments for CGH may include education about posture and sleeping positions, NSAID's such as aspirin or anti-inflammatories, spinal manipulation and/or mobilization, acupuncture, physical therapy such as neck stretching and strengthening exercises, occipital nerve block injections, cervical epidural steroid injections and radiofrequency treatment.

WHAT KIND OF RESULTS CAN BE EXPECTED?

With an experienced pain physician, patients can expect relief in a relatively short period of time. Proper diagnosing and progressive treatment can yield positive results in as little as a few days. Patients can expect not only to decrease their pain, but also to learn strategies and techniques that may help to prevent recurrence, increase range of motion, and resume daily activities.