

## “Handling Headaches”

### **Mission:**

We at West U Wellness are committed to serving people who want a natural, higher quality of life for themselves and their families. We acknowledge that physical, chemical, and particularly emotional stress has devastating effects on the nervous system. Chiropractic adjustments remove this nervous system interference. Therefore, we go to extraordinary measures in educating society about the benefits of chiropractic care for optimal health.

A headache is a nearly universal human experience. In any given year, ninety percent of Americans say they've had at least one headache not caused by a cold, the flu, a hangover or a head injury. But even though headaches are common, there are headache-prone individuals who have frequent attacks, where headaches become a significant medical symptom and not just a problem of everyday life.

### **Prevalence**

Headache is one of the most common symptoms of individuals seeking medical care, accounting for almost ten million outpatient visits per year in the United States. Headache is a potential side effect for countless medications and is often the first indicator that the body is undergoing an assault, whether bacterial, viral, biochemical, hormonal, or other imbalance.

### **What are the main types of headaches?**

There are two categories of headaches, primary headaches, where the headache problem is the disorder, and secondary headaches, where the headache is a symptom of an underlying condition like a stroke, a brain tumor or an infection. If we look at the primary headaches, there are four major kinds: migraine, tension-type, cluster and then the fourth group is a miscellaneous group of headaches, usually uncommon types.

No two people feel or describe pain in the exact same way. However, the various types of headaches have symptoms that are

fairly consistent. The following descriptions are provided to help you associate the type of pain you experience with these various headache groups.

### **Primary Headache Types:**

Migraine: More common in women; unilateral throbbing pain, often preceded by warning signs (flashing lights, tunnel vision, or other neurological symptoms); associated with nausea; may be hereditary; worse with physical activity; may last several hours or up to several days.

Cluster: More common in men; rapid onset of severe unilateral pain lasting up to thirty minutes; pain appears in regular groups and symptoms disappear between “clusters”; often centered around one eye, the temples or forehead; associated with red watery eyes, eyelid droop, or nasal stuffiness.

Rebound: Also called pharmacologically maintained headache, this headache type is caused by taking medication too frequently. Even over the counter medications can be the culprit, especially if they contain caffeine. Analgesics should usually not be used more than three days each week to avoid this headache. A survey of family doctors found that this headache type was the third most common headache seen.

Post Traumatic: Headache occurring following head or neck injury, often associated with dizziness, fatigue, or memory problems.



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## **Secondary Headache Types:**

Organic: Due to underlying medical causes, such as a stroke, tumor, or infections; pain often appears and grows worse over time.

## Worrisome Symptoms:

Only 1 out of 25,000 acute headaches is a symptom of a serious underlying disorder. The following is a list of worrisome symptoms. If any of these symptoms describe your headache (HA) pattern, you should consult a doctor.

- The first HA occurs after age 50.
- The HA is severe, new, unlike past headaches.
- The “worst” HA ever experienced.
- The headache becomes worse over time.
- Headache occurs with exertion, sexual activity, coughing or sneezing.
- With the headache, the person feels drowsy, confused, feverish, or shows physical decline.

## What's the biggest myth about headaches?

The reality is that, if people are living with pain, with anxiety, with limitations on their ability to either do the things they want to do or make the plans they want to make because of headaches, that's a very good reason to seek medical care. Headache is not a problem that you need to learn to live with. It's a problem that you need to learn to manage and live without.

## **Methods to manage headache pain:**

Chiropractic: A proven method for relieving musculoskeletal pain and restoring function by adjusting subluxated vertebrae to promote proper nerve and blood flow. Restoring the proper nerve and blood flow then allows the body to communicate normally with itself so it can eliminate the cause of one's symptoms. We also use posture training, exercise, mobilization and physical modalities to assist patients in managing their headache episodes.

Acupuncture: An ancient treatment for headache practiced throughout the world, acupuncture is used to treat attacks or prevent headaches. Fine metal needles are placed through the skin in specific positions on the body, and the needles are left in place for 20-30 minutes. The theory behind the practice of acupuncture suggests that disorders are caused by a blockage in the body's energy. The needles release the blockage, freeing the body to heal itself.

Nutrition: Nutrition can play a large part in why someone has a headache. There are several foods that can contribute to headaches. One of the most common is aspartame, and that would certainly explain the increase in occurrences, since many headache sufferers have serious soda addictions: simply avoiding this synthetic sweetener has cleared up many people's headaches. Other foods that can cause headache problems are cured meats, wine (especially red), cheese and beer. Cabbage, coffee, chocolate, pickled, marinated or fermented foods, nuts and nut butters, sourdough breads, pizza, lima and fava beans, snow peas, MSG, soy sauce, tenderizers and seasoned salts, or more than a cupful of bananas, figs, raisins, papaya, avocado and/or red plums in any given day!

Staying hydrated, avoiding preservatives, and getting enough sleep are all-important factors in decreasing the frequency of headaches. And although caffeinated products may make your headache feel better, it could be that your body is dependent on caffeine and you are going through withdrawal.

Certain vitamins can drastically improve headaches. These include magnesium, vitamins B1, B2 and B6, zinc and essential fatty acids. Research has been done primarily on magnesium and riboflavin.

## Magnesium

A German study in 1996 (Peikert – Cephalagia 16:257-263) found a link between low magnesium levels and migraines: after all, magnesium is a natural muscle relaxant. The best form to take is magnesium citrate. The recommended dosage is 5-10 mg/kg of body weight. For someone who weighs 150 lbs., this averages around 400 mg/day. At this level you will want to balance it with the proper dosage of calcium and other essential minerals. Foods high in magnesium include brown rice, fish, bananas, tofu, blackstrap molasses, seafood and avocados. Magnesium should not be taken in people with kidney problems.

## Riboflavin (B2)

High doses of B2 (400 mg/day) have been shown to also prevent the frequency of migraines. Especially good sources of Vitamin B2 are eggs, lean meat, milk, broccoli and enriched breads and cereals. Beware that high doses can cause deficiencies of other B vitamins as well as other symptoms. Consult your healthcare professional before trying this.

As with most vitamins, the full effects of the vitamins may not be realized for 4-6 weeks. At our office, we carry the most effective forms of vitamins to help with headaches, and we also have a formula that is a natural muscle relaxant. Come by and find out more about how vitamins and alternatives can eliminate headaches.

## **Fit for Life Program**



“As a recently diagnosed diabetic, I needed help with my diet and exercise. I received a newsletter from West U Wellness with the “Fit for Life” class.

Each class focused on a different area, such as cholesterol and glycemic index. The class was presented in a relaxed environment with welcome discussion. We were taught stretches and exercises that could be done in the home or while traveling.

I have lost some weight, but more importantly, my numbers are looking great; my doctor is very happy with my progress.”

- Sandi B.

West U Wellness hosts or participates in numerous events and activities each month. Included in these events are free health talks covering a different topic every **Tuesday at 6:00 PM** in West U Wellness. We believe these talks to be a means of allowing our patients to improve their lifestyles.

***\*Does your back hurt?  
Join us this Tuesday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>  
at 6:00pm for a Health Talk on Low Back Pain!***



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## February Calendar of Events

		1 Arthritis Health Talk	2 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	3	4	5
6	7	8 General Nutrition Health Talk	9 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	10	11	12 <b>West U Wellness Open</b>
13	14	15 Headache Health Talk	16 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	17	18	19
20	21	22 <b>*Low Back Pain Health Talk</b>	23 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	24	25	26 <b>West U Wellness Open</b>
27	28					

## March Calendar of Events

		1 Acupuncture Health Talk	2 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	3	4	5 <b>West U Wellness Open</b>
6	7	8 Pregnancy Health Talk	9 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	10	11	12
13	14	15 Allergies Health Talk	16 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	17	18	19 <b>West U Wellness Open</b>
20	21	22 Stress Management w/Pilates	23 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	24	25 Good Friday (Open ½ day)	26
27 Easter	28 Closed	29 Cholesterol Health Talk	30 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	31		

*Dr. Sherman Yeager & Dr. Caroline Long are available to give free "stress management" lectures to a variety of groups. If you would like us to speak at your company or have us come to offer free spinal screenings at your place of work, your school or your church, please contact our office at (713) 490-2225.*

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