

# How To End Or Ease Your Headaches So You Can Enjoy More Of Your Life Without Limits



**By Peter Bennett BSc DC**

# Headaches



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## INTRODUCTION

I wrote this report to help people who suffer from chronic headaches, who have suffered for years and have tried many approaches to try to ease their headaches – without success.

It sometimes feels like chiropractors are the “secret service” for headache sufferers.

We’ve helped many, many people to end or ease the pain but it’s not something you see a lot about in the papers or on TV.

I want to help as many people as we can because I used to suffer from headaches too when I was younger - before I went to see a chiropractor, that is.

It’s because a chiropractor changed my life that I become one myself.

Some 15 years later I’m still running a family practice - and it’s very rewarding to see so many successes.

Headaches are a bigger health issue than most people think. About 1 in 7 people in the UK suffer from them.

People who suffer headaches are often led to believe that nothing can be done about them - just medicine to reduce the pain - but that’s not the case. Many headache sufferers have experienced great relief from a solution few think of - seeing a chiropractor!

This report will explain what headaches are and how you can help yourself to reduce the frequency of your headaches.

## **Some of the statistics and figures about headache may surprise you...**

### **Key Facts**

Source - World Health Organisation Headache disorders Fact sheet N°277 October 2012

Headache disorders are among the most common disorders of the nervous system.

- It has been estimated that 47% of the adult population have headache at least once within last year in general.
- Headache disorders are associated with personal and societal burdens of pain, disability, damaged quality of life and financial cost.
- A minority of people with headache disorders worldwide are diagnosed appropriately by a health-care provider.
- Headache has been underestimated, under-recognized and under-treated throughout the world.

**One of the ways to start to manage your headaches is to understand what they are and what causes them**

### **Types of headache disorders**

Migraine, tension-type headache and medication-overuse headache are of public health importance as they are responsible for high population levels of disability and ill-health.

#### **Migraine**

A primary headache disorder.

Most often begins at puberty and most affects those aged between 35 and 45 years.

It is caused by the activation of a mechanism deep in the brain that leads to release of pain-producing inflammatory substances around the nerves and blood vessels of the head.

Migraine is recurrent, often life-long, and characterized by attacks.

Attacks include features such as:

- headache of moderate or severe intensity;
- nausea (the most characteristic);
- one-sided and/or pulsating quality;
- aggravated by routine physical activity;
- with duration of hours to 2-3 days;
- attack frequency is anywhere between once a year and once a week; and
- in children, attacks tend to be of shorter duration and abdominal symptoms more prominent.

### **Tension-type headache (TTH)**

TTH is the most common primary headache disorder.

Episodic TTH is reported by more than 70% of some populations; chronic TTH affects 1-3% of adults.

TTH often begins during the teenage years, affecting three women to every two men.

Its mechanism may be stress-related or associated with musculoskeletal problems in the neck. (This is where chiropractic comes in)

Episodic TTH attacks usually last a few hours, but can persist for several days.

Chronic TTH can be unremitting and is much more disabling than episodic TTH. This headache is described as pressure or tightness, like a band around the head, sometimes spreading into or from the neck.

### **Cluster Headache (CH)**

A primary headache disorder.

CH is relatively uncommon affecting fewer than 1 in 1000 adults, affecting six men to each woman.

Most people developing CH are in their 20s or older.

It is characterized by frequent recurring, brief but extremely severe headache associated with pain around the eye with tearing and redness, the nose runs or is blocked on the affected side and the eyelid may droop.

CH has episodic and chronic forms.

## Medication-overuse headache (MOH) or Rebound Headache

MOH is caused by chronic and excessive use of medication to treat headache.

MOH is the most common secondary headaches.

It may affect up to 5% of some populations, women more than men.

MOH is oppressive, persistent and often at its worst on awakening, because the medication you took the night before has worn off.

### Who is affected by headaches?

In the United Kingdom, for example, some 25 million working- or school-days are lost every year because of migraine alone; this financial cost is matched by TTH and chronic daily headache combined.



Headache is high among causes of consulting medical practitioners as one-third of all neurological consultations were for headache, in one survey.

Yet, many of those troubled by headache do not receive effective care. For example, in the United States of America and the United Kingdom, only half of those identified with migraine had seen a doctor for headache-related reasons in the previous 12 months, and only two-thirds had been correctly diagnosed. Most were solely reliant on over-the-counter medications.

### How often do they occur?

Everyone will experience headaches differently. Some people have attacks frequently, up to several times a week. Other people only have a headache occasionally. It is possible for years to pass between headache attacks. I was having 3 – 4 headaches a week and was eating packets of paracetamol. Strangely, because I had grown up with this, I thought this was normal.

### Outlook

A headache can be very disabling and can severely affect your quality of life. Some people need to stay in bed for days at a time.

For most headache sufferers the headaches are not disabling, but they are frustrating, annoying and wear you down and affect your mood.

However, there are effective treatments and methods that can help to prevent headaches. Most people find ways of managing their headaches so that there is little disruption to their lives.

## Triggers

headaches are believed to be caused by the release of a chemical called serotonin into the bloodstream, resulting in changes in the brain. Exactly what causes this to happen is still a subject for research and debate? However, certain factors that can trigger attacks in susceptible people have been identified.

These include:

- emotional stress, such as anger, tension or shock
- physical stress, such as overexertion or travelling
- diet, such as infrequent meals, alcohol (especially red wine) or additives
- environmental causes, such as supermarket lights, computer screens, smoking or loud noise
- hormonal causes, such as puberty, menstruation or pregnancy
- high blood pressure, eye strain or the use of sleeping tablets

## 10 Ways To Reduce The Frequency Of Headaches

The problem with headache prevention is that there isn't just one cause for the headaches.

There are very many triggers for headaches, in fact, and trying to avoid them all would be an exercise in chemistry. Who wants to spend the rest of their life living in a cave just to avoid headaches? That being said, there are a few things you can do to avoid headaches and here are the top ten.

1) Cut the caffeine. Among the multitude of products linked to headaches is caffeine. Taking in too much can lead to a headache of monstrous proportions. Unfortunately, it's not only too much caffeine that lead to a headache, it's caffeine withdrawal if you're used to taking in a lot. Best to cut back slowly.

2) While we're talking about caffeine, let's also talk about artificial sweeteners. Aspartame has been the culprit for many people who have complained of headaches. Go in search of why aspartame causes headaches and you will run into what seems like the biggest cover-up since Roswell. Most of what you'll read hasn't been proven, but then again neither have the makers of NutraSweet proven

that their product doesn't contribute to headaches. Avoid it and you may well avoid a horrendous headache.

3) There are more reasons to give up smoking than you can count, but avoiding headaches is another reason to put on the list. Of course, that's easier than said than done if you are the smoker, but remember, second-hand smoke is just as likely to cause a headache as actual smoking. So if you can, remove yourself from the environment in which people are smoking. Better yet: Get them to remove themselves. You do have the right to not have to be around their smoke, especially if their smoke is causing your headaches.

4) Establish a regular pattern of sleeping and waking. In fact, get as anal-retentive as you can about this. A regular pattern of going to bed at the same time and getting up at the same time, on weekends as well as weekdays, can do wonders. Many people who have instituted a rigid routine of sleeping and waking have discovered that their headaches disappear completely and forever. Or at least as long as they continue the pattern.

5) Give up the pill and try another form of contraception. Birth control pills and their effects on hormones can be a major hazard when it comes to headache pain. You don't necessarily have to go off the pill entirely. Some people have found that merely changing brands puts an end to their headache misery. If that doesn't help, however, you may look into other forms of female contraception or, if you and your partner don't mind, switching over to condoms.

6) Change your lighting. Very bright lights can often trigger very severe headaches. You might consider using the softer, filmy kind of light bulbs. Or use lamps instead of overhead lights. Or stop using fluorescent lighting, if that's possible. If you spend a lot of time at the computer monitor, take frequent breaks and get as far away from the pulsating waves of the monitor as possible.

7) Cheese, chocolate and wine may sound like the ideal ingredients for a romantic picnic, but if you are prone to headaches the last thing you may be feeling is romantic following that afternoon getaway. Aged cheeses especially are dangerous because they contain the amino acid tyramine. Chocolate contains phenylethamine. Both chemicals contribute to headaches and alcohol is a trigger as well. Stay away from all three and find other ways to get in a romantic mood.

8) Use body wash to smell good instead of perfume or cologne. Odours and aromas are major causes of headaches and those that make you smell good are among the worst. Keep yourself clean instead of daubing with the smelly-goods.

9) Following an aerobic exercise program. Exercising regularly helps to increase your cardiovascular capacity and improper blood flow is linked to recurrent headaches.

10) Drive or take a train when you can instead of flying. The lowering of cabin pressure on airplanes is a common headache trigger and one easily avoided when the trip can be made by alternative means of transportation.

## **Headaches: Are Pain-Killing Drugs Worth the Risk?**

All drugs are dangerous. Before a person suffering with a headache takes an over-the-counter medication they should be asking the question "Is the possible benefit worth the risk of taking that drug?" William Osler, M.D. once said "The person who takes medicine must recover twice; once from the disease and once from the medicine." Sadly, this can be all too true.

Dr. William Bennett, head of nephrology at Oregon Health Sciences University, estimates that over-the-counter painkillers are responsible for as many as 20% of the 125,000 cases of end-stage kidney disease in the United States.

Some medications have side effects that can be more serious than the painful headaches themselves. Aspirin can cause internal haemorrhaging, or bleeding in the stomach. According to the Dec. 1996 issue of Health News and Views taking Tylenol once every 4 days increases the chance of liver damage by more than 400%.

The main pain-relief ingredient in Tylenol is acetaminophen which has been shown to cause liver disease. "Tylenol," as reported in the January 1998 issue of Forbes magazine, "can be very dangerous in doses not much greater" than the recommended dose. In 1989, Lacy Keele, a 5-year-old, took four extra strength tablets in one day, or twice what a child should receive. The overdose destroyed Lacy's liver. Within a week she was dead. A jury found Tylenol to be a cause in her death.

There have been hundreds of fatalities and serious liver injuries attributed to acetaminophen, Tylenol's active ingredient, since Lacy's death. The biggest reason for these deaths is because people "tend to use Tylenol in a casual fashion." Think about it: You have a headache so you take a few pills. The headache doesn't go away so you take a few more. The difference between a proper dose and an overdose is so small that dangerous amounts can easily be ingested accidentally. "No other over-the-counter drug has a more narrow range between therapy and toxicity than acetaminophen," says Dr. William Lee, a professor of internal medicine at the University of Texas' Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

L.F. Kebler, M.D. once said "Why should a patient swallow a poison because he is ill, or take that which would make a well man sick?" And O.W. Holmes, M.D., Professor of Medicine at Harvard University said "If all the medicine in the world were thrown into the sea, it would be bad for the fish and good for humanity."

In the September 29, 1996 issue of the Los Angeles Times Magazine it makes it known that Ibuprofen kills thousands every year. Ibuprofen, the active ingredient in many pain relievers, including Advil, Motrin IB, and Nuprin, is known as a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). People that take NSAIDs like ibuprofen regularly to ease their chronic headache headaches are prone to gastric (stomach) disorders. Dr. James F. Fries, a leading arthritis expert and professor of medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine, says "there's an epidemic of adverse drug reactions to NSAIDs. The FDA believes anywhere from 10,000 to 20,000 deaths each year are the result of severe bleeding caused by NSAIDs. It's a big problem."

When taking medication to relieve headaches it's always a good idea to read the label carefully. If you decide to take pain-killing medications for your headaches be sure to follow the directions. Using common sense can reduce your chances of experiencing adverse reactions.

## **Natural Treatments For Headache**

There are many new headache treatments available that can be both safe and effective. Natural treatments for headaches are usually safer and cheaper than traditional pain medications. And in many instances they can relieve pain just as well or even better than prescription or non-prescription drugs. The possibility of a negative reaction to a safe and natural headache treatment is still there, but it is less with most natural treatment methods than it is with pain-relieving medications.

Every person on the face of the earth is unique. Their body chemistry is different than anyone else's. One person may find relief from their headaches with one type of treatment while someone else may try that same treatment and find no relief at all. No two people will experience the same reaction from the same treatment. But why is that?

Every body is made up of a mixture of chemicals. Every person produces certain chemicals in their body so that they will be able to function at their best. Histamines will increase gastric secretion and dilate the capillaries. Insulin is secreted by the pancreas and helps regulate the blood sugar levels. Hormones are produced by the body for many different functions. Adrenaline (epinephrine) is produced in response to stress. Every body is unique and produces different chemicals in differing amounts. When a person takes aspirin (a chemical) for their headaches it changes the chemical make-up of that person's body.

You've always heard that when two chemicals, in the same amounts, at the same temperature, etc. are mixed together they will cause the same reaction. That may be true, but when one chemical (such as aspirin) is taken by two separate people their reactions will never be exactly the same because no two people have identical chemicals in their body. One person taking aspirin will not have the same reaction as someone else taking aspirin. And it's the same with natural

headache headache treatments. Since no two people are identical no two people will respond exactly the same to a treatment method for headaches.

So just because one headache treatment does not work for one person does not mean it won't work for your headaches. There are many effective alternatives to taking medications when it comes to relieving headaches. You just have to try one for yourself to see if it will work for you.

One natural and popular treatment method for headaches is chiropractic care. Studies have shown that over 80% of headache patients find some type of relief for their headaches with chiropractic treatment. And chiropractic treatment has been shown to be extremely safe. Spinal problems cause headaches and when these spinal problems are treated by chiropractors a high percentage of their patients experience relieve from their pain.

Chiropractors recognise that symptoms such as headaches are signs from the body that there is a problem going on. Rather than just reducing the symptoms chiropractors aim to find and correct the underlying cause. Once the underlying cause is sorted out your body no longer needs to show the symptoms.

Another natural way to relieve headaches is biofeedback. This is a safe and potentially effective way to eliminate pain. Biofeedback is not actually a treatment, but a training program designed to help a person develop the ability to control their autonomic (involuntary) nervous system. Functions that are normally automatic in the body, such as blood pressure regulation or heart rate can be controlled voluntarily. This technique makes it possible for a person to control their own heart rate, blood pressure, skin temperature or relaxation of their muscles.

It's no secret that stress causes muscle tension. And nobody will deny that muscle tension causes pain and headaches. And it's also a fact that by relaxing this muscle tension, especially in the neck and head, it is possible to relieve the headaches or neck pain that is being caused by the tension. A person that has been trained with biofeedback can control some of their bodily functions, such as muscle relaxation, which can help relieve their headache pain.

Another cause of headaches can be the intake of too much salt. Some people just can't get enough of it. They pour it onto their food with reckless abandon. And too much salt can and does cause headaches. What's the solution? Simply lessening the salt intake can sometimes prevent the headaches from occurring.

Food sensitivities have also been shown to cause headaches in some people. Foods such as cheese, alcohol, MSG (monosodium glutamate - a food additive), yeast, wheat, nuts, avocados, beans, bananas, oranges (and other citrus fruits), pork, vinegar (and pickled foods), dairy products, caffeine, chocolate, onions and others can cause headaches. Foods that cause headaches are called "headache

triggers." People who experience headaches because of food allergies can reduce or eliminate their pain by eliminating the foods that cause the headaches.

It sounds simple, but it takes a little detective work to figure out which foods, if any, are causing the headaches. So how can you determine which foods are the culprits? The logical way is to keep a diary of what you eat and when. Get a small notebook, with each page representing one day, and make three columns on each of the pages. The first column on the left side of the page will contain the hours in the day. The second column down the middle of the page will be a list of the foods eaten that day. And the third column on the right side of the page will list the symptoms (headaches) that you experience.

Here's how the food diary works: if you had an orange, cereal and milk for breakfast at 8 AM you would write "orange, cereal, milk" in the middle (food) column directly to the right of 8 AM in the left (time) column. Make a note of everything that you eat on this list and at what time you ate them.

Next, whenever you experience a headache write "headache" in the right (symptoms) column that corresponds with the time (in the left column) your headache began. For example, if you started feeling pain from one of your headaches at 2 PM you would write "headache" in the right (symptoms) column directly across from 2 PM in the left (time) column.

Once you've had enough time to experience a few headaches you will be able to examine your food diary to determine which foods you ate shortly before you began experiencing your pain. For example, if you had 3 headaches over a one-month period, and you had milk shortly before each of the headache attacks, milk may be the culprit. It may take a few weeks or even a few months to come to any conclusions, but over time, by figuring out which foods or ingredients in these foods, are causing your pain, you will be able to eliminate these ingredients and relieve your pain caused by these foods.

Probably the most common cause of headaches is just plain old stress. People who experience tension in their lives can get headaches from their increased tension. Stress can be caused by many things including work-related stress or family-related stress. And although it's not always possible to eliminate the cause of the stress it is often possible to relieve the muscle tension and pain that originates from the stress.

Biofeedback training (as explained above) is one way to help reduce stress. Other ways are taking a warm bath or shower, lying down and relaxing in a quiet dark room, having someone massage your neck and head (temporal region) muscles to help relieve your tension and muscle spasms or placing something cold (ice) on the back of the neck (at the base of the skull). When using ice it should not be placed directly on the skin. Some wet paper towels that have had the water wrung out of them should be placed between the ice and the skin. Regular exercise can also, over time, reduce tension.

We have discussed 5 natural treatment methods that are available to headache patients. They are all considered safe and are effective for many people. There are many other natural treatment methods out there for you to try. If you have headaches it may be beneficial for you to try some of these treatments or search for others on your own. But as a word of advice, it is always a good idea to talk with a chiropractor or medical doctor before treating yourself for a health condition.

If you would like to talk to one of our chiropractors you can [request a call here](#)

### **How Would A Chiropractor Look After A Headache Sufferer?**

The first thing to realise is that chiropractors will always look for the underlying causes of your condition, rather than just trying to reduce your symptoms.

Our approach is that if we can get everything in your body working normally then your body will behave normally - that is, no headaches.

First we have to identify the causes. If you have recently developed headaches then we strongly advise seeing your GP first to rule out any medical emergencies.

### **But I Have Tried Everything**

If you have had headaches for many years you have probably tried many, many approaches and many treatments.

Most of our clients have tried pretty much everything to no avail, and understandably have become pretty cynical.

### **We offer a free initial consultation**

so that we can find out

1. Whether the cause of your headache is one that a chiropractor could and should deal with

2. Whether, after you have had a full explanation, it is the right approach for you.

We start with a examination of your posture and your spine

Then, because the focus of chiropractic care is on making sure your nervous system is working properly we will measure your nerves using a scanner. You will get a report like the one below.



### First Scan

If your nerves are working properly, then you don't need a chiropractor and we will advise who would be the best professional to see.

If you have problems with your nerves then you are in the right place to start getting your health back!

We then use the scanner to monitor your progress and make sure you are getting results.



Same client as the scan above after 12 visits

### **Would Chiropractic Be Suitable For You?**

We don't know until we have spoken to you, taken your history, and completed the scan.

[Request a call](#) from us to talk to one of our chiropractors or book in your free consultation and scan.

We look forward to hearing from you

Peter Bennett DC

### **About the author**

I first graduated as a scientist and worked in research in academia and the pharmaceutical industry, running clinical trials. I became a chiropractic patient because I had increasing problems with my jaw. My GP advised me to try a chiropractor and I went for my first visit with a lot of scepticism. I walked out from that first visit absolutely stunned by what I had learned – it made more sense to me than all the things I had learned in the previous 20 years!

I learnt that my jaw problems, neck problems, headaches, digestive problems, and concentration issues were all related to problems with my spine and nervous system.

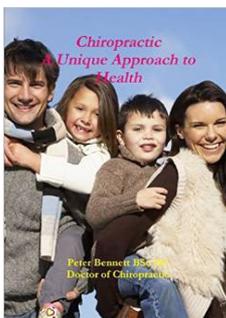
It was the effect on my headaches which impressed me most. Luckily mine weren't that severe – but they were very frequent (about 3 per week) and left me with a fuzzy head for days, and I was living on paracetamol. (Strangely, because I had grown up with constant headaches, I thought this was normal and I never thought to get anything done about them. Being young I didn't consider the long-term consequences of taking so much medication) After a few visits I was completely clear of both my headaches and I stopped having daily painkillers.

I was so impressed by the power of chiropractic that I gave up my high paid job in the pharmaceutical company (with company car) and enrolled in the McTimoney College of Chiropractic in Oxford, graduating in 1998. Luckily my wife was incredibly supportive as we had just had our first child.

After working in Oxfordshire I moved my family to Cumbria, to set up Penrith Family Chiropractic.

I, my wife and seven children all receive regular chiropractic care. My children have been adjusted since birth to make sure they have an unfair advantage in life, and as an insurance policy. It is easier to prevent problems than to repair all the damage once it has happened.

Me adjusting our youngest child Willow



I have written a book about chiropractic to help us explain the history of chiropractic and how it works. It is available on Amazon if you would like a copy. Just click on the picture.