**Cervicogenic Headache**

**What is it?**

Headaches are a generic term for any pain in the cranial region. They can be caused by a variety of factors and there are many different types. A severe headache can stop you in your tracks and be severely debilitating. One kind of headache that is commonly treated by physiotherapists is cervicogenic headache or a headache that originates from the neck.

**What are the symptoms?**

The pain of a cervicogenic headache is usually unilateral (on one side), and often described as a dull or aching pain that can be felt in the neck, head, and sometimes the face. It can also be accompanied by other symptoms such as neck stiffness, limited range of motion in the neck, and tenderness in the neck or scalp.

**How does it happen?**

Cervicogenic headache is an example of referred pain, where dysfunction of the structures in the neck cause pain to be felt in a different location. The most common reason for this pain to be felt are joint and muscle stiffness around the cervical spine.

Tight muscles can develop trigger points that refer pain into the cranial region in a typical pattern. Headaches can also be caused by irritated nerves that originate in the spine and travel into the head. Whiplash following a trauma such as a car accident is known to cause ongoing neck-related headaches without treatment.

**How is it diagnosed?**

Diagnosis of a cervicogenic headache can be difficult as it needs to be differentiated from other forms of headache such as migraine, tension headaches and sinus headaches. Your physiotherapist will perform a thorough assessment to determine the origins of your headaches. Some signs that headaches are caused by cervical dysfunction include muscle tightness, joint limitations, concurrent neck pain and poor posture.

**What is the treatment?**

Treatment for neck-related headaches is aimed at correcting any dysfunction, restoring movement and flexibility to stiff joints and muscles and addressing any postural vulnerabilities.

**None of the information in this article is a replacement for proper medical advice. Always see a medical professional for advice on your condition.**