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Headaches can be extremely debilitating to those individuals who suffer from them. There are many different types of headaches, all of which can have different provoking factors and causes of pain. It is estimated that there are 74.2 million days of restricted work activity and \$1.4 billion dollars in lost productivity in the United States each year due to headaches. The Journal of the American Medical Association estimates that 27% of females and 14% of males suffer from severe headaches. In 1995, Consumer Reports conducted a survey of its readers asking the question, "Which condition were you most dissatisfied with regards to your healthcare." The number one answer was headaches.

One of the reasons headaches are so difficult to treat is that we do not know their underlying cause. Rarely do tests such as MRIs, CT scans, lab tests or other tests provide relevant information. These tests can help diagnose or rule out significant causes of headaches such as a tumor, hematoma, hemorrhage, temporal arteritis, meningitis, and acute glaucoma, however, these conditions are rare. The vast majority of headaches are benign and will not provide relevant information on these tests. Common types of benign headaches include tension type headaches, migraines, cervicogenic headaches and others. The causes of benign headache pain range from increased muscle activity, opening and closing of the arteries in the head, dysfunctional joints of the neck and chemicals released by the body. Headache sufferers often have fluctuating levels of the neurotransmitter, serotonin, wider variations of body temperature, blood pressure, pulse and respiration rate, and altered biomechanics or movements of the neck.

Triggers of headaches can vary and are wide ranging. They include, but are not limited to, trauma, stress, alcohol, caffeine, chronic muscle overload, low blood sugar, changes in sleep pattern, bright lights, loud noises and certain types of food. A major key to treating headaches is trying to determine the provoking factors and then eliminating them. Stress management is an important component in helping to alleviate headaches. Diet diaries can be beneficial in determining if there is a food component to the headache. Maintaining blood sugar levels by eating regularly or eliminating simple carbohydrates helps to control hypoglycemic

reactions.

Multiple studies have shown the efficacy of chiropractic manipulation as a treatment for headaches, including a recent study published by Duke University. Active Release Techniques can significantly help with muscular headaches, as can Yoga, meditation, and stress management. Some studies have shown benefits from taking 600 mg of Magnesium, in divided doses, daily. Other studies have demonstrated benefits with taking 400 mg of vitamin B2 (Riboflavin). Feverfew is an herbal supplement that has had mixed results. Some studies have indicated that Feverfew was effective in reducing headache frequency and symptoms of nausea and vomiting, while other studies have shown no benefit. Prescription medication and over the counter medication can have beneficial effects. Consult your medical doctor or pharmacist regarding medications used for headaches.

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