

HEADACHES

Headaches are classified as either primary or secondary. Primary headaches occur when the problem is the disorder, while secondary headaches occur as a result of another condition such as stroke, infection, brain tumor, or head injury.

Primary headaches can further be categorized as one of the following three:

Cervicogenic Headache - originates on one side of the neck or back of the head and travels up the head above the ears; often resembling a “ram’s horn.” Symptoms increase with neck movement, sustained neck postures, or with pressure between the back of the head and top of the neck.

Tension Type Headache - typified by a constricting “vice-like” ache felt in the head, neck, and jaw muscle. Contributing factors may include anxiety, fatigue, caffeine, nicotine, chewing, yawning, or talking.

Migraine Headache - Usually characterized by throbbing pain on one or both sides of the head, with a combination of nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light and/or noise. There is also some complaint of neck pain.

The key to creating an effective treatment plan for patients with headache pain is a thorough interview and physical examination. Analyzing the information from the interview and exam allows the physical therapist to design a unique and effective treatment plan, to address the specific headache conditions of each patient.