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Health and Beauty

Neck Stretching Can Treat Headaches

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There are many different medications, surgeries and interventions to treat headaches, but a new study reveals an effective way to treat primary headaches might be at your fingertips – neck stretching. By performing simple neck stretching exercises that stubborn and painful headache might just disappear.

The study, published in Workplace Health and Safety, examined the effects of a neck stretching exercise intervention on nurses' primary headaches. It used a pre-test and post-test two-group design with a total of 60 female staff nurses employed by a medical center in Taiwan.

Participants in the experimental group (a total of 30 patients) practiced neck stretching exercises while experiencing headaches. The participants in the control group (the other 30 patients) managed their headaches as they would usually do.

According to Dr. Elliot Shevel, South Africa's migraine surgery pioneer and the medical director of The Headache Clinic, a structured questionnaire was used to collect data on headache intensity at baseline, and at 30 minutes and 1 hour after intervention.

"Decrease in headache intensity of the experimental group was significantly larger than that of the control group," says Shevel. "The conclusion was that neck stretching exercises is an effective method for treating primary headaches."

What exercises can you do?

By simply doing some physiotherapy exercises at the office or in the comfort of your own home, you can treat your own headaches, says Shevel. The Headache Clinic's in-house Physiotherapist Urvashi Chiba has put together a short demonstration video with practical advice and exercise demonstration.

The illustrations shows you how to stretch out your neck muscles. The muscles are shortened due to muscle tension and they need to be lengthened out. Each stretch needs to be held for about 20 seconds.



Place your right hand over your left ear, gently pull your head to the side.



until you feel a stretch on your left hand side, hold that for 20 seconds.



Repeat the same thing on the opposite side.



The second stretch, you are going to be looking into your armpit area.



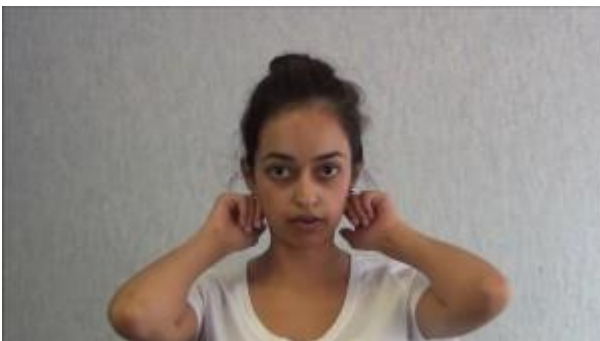
Gently pull your head towards the floor.



Repeat on the opposite side. The stretching sensation should be felt on the side and a little towards the back of the neck.



The final stretching exercise, you are going to be placing your hands at the back of your head and pushing your chin towards your chest.



The stretching sensation should be felt at the back of the neck.

Things to remember when doing neck stretching:

- Do the neck stretches two to three times per day.
- Stretches are more effective and comfortable when the muscle is warm. Ideally it can be done in the shower, after a bath or after heating the muscles with a heat pack.
- Do not pull too hard; a gentle pulling sensation should be felt.
- The stretch should be gentle and should not cause you pain
- Take regular breaks from the computer or seated position.
- Maintain correct seated position in front of your computer or desk. Correct computer posture
- Maintain correct seated position whilst driving. Correct driving posture
- Avoid awkward positions, especially for extended periods of time

For more information or to set up an interview with Dr. Shevel please contact Kayleen Naidoo on +2711 484 0933 or kayleen@headacheclinic.co.za