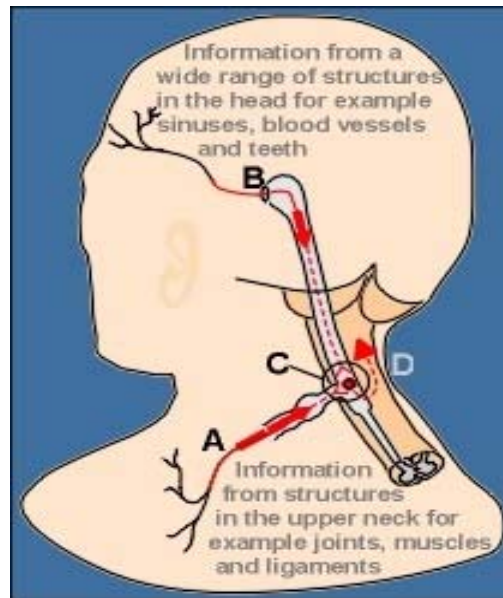


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**Is it all in  
your head?**

# CAN YOUR NECK CAUSE YOUR HEADACHE?

## Yes



In the case of cervicogenic or neck-related headache – where a common disorder is restriction of movement of one or more of the upper three spinal joints – abnormal information (A) from a disorder in the upper neck overlaps and combines in the upper part of the spinal cord (C) with normal information from structures in the head (B). This combined information (D) travels to the brain where the abnormal information from the disorder in the upper neck (A) is interpreted as having come from structures inside the head (B) and head pain or headache results.

Because the symptoms of the common persistent headache forms – tension-type headache, cervicogenic or neck-related and common migraine or migraine without aura overlap, it is often difficult for a clear diagnosis to be made. However aggravation of a neck disorder, reproducing headache suggests neck involvement in headache. If it was the case that headache was coming from a process or a disorder of structures in the head then a relevant neck disorder is less likely to be found. In this situation treatment of the neck has no role to play in the management of the headache.

# HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR HEADACHES ARE COMING FROM YOUR NECK?

Some features suggesting that headache is coming from a neck problem are:

- a one sided headache which changes sides within the same headache or between headaches
- headache triggered by prolonged or awkward neck movements or positioning
- headache preceded by and/or accompanied by neck stiffness or soreness
- a history of neck or head injury
- the severity of headache varies within the same headache and/or between headaches
- increasing frequency of headache
- headaches of varying length and often no consistent pattern
- a 'side-locked' headache that is a headache which does not changes sides and is always on the same side with or without some spread to the other side

**If your neck has not been examined and other investigations have not revealed the source of persistent headache, and your headache has some of the features mentioned above, then a neck disorder could be responsible for the headache.**

# WHAT TYPE OF HEADACHE DO YOU HAVE?

Diagnosis of headache relies almost solely on the history and presenting features of the headache. This is often difficult because surveys of headache sufferers have revealed considerable overlap of symptoms between the common recurring persistent headache forms of cervicogenic or neck-related, tension-type and common migraine or migraine without aura.

# HEADACHE TRIGGERS

Dietary Factors

Stress

Tension/Anxiety

Hormonal Changes

Familial pre-disposition

Migrainous Component

*Whilst most people tend to have specific triggers related to their headaches, nearly all patients present with some involvement of the neck...*

*If you suffer from regular headaches, ask your physiotherapist to check your neck*