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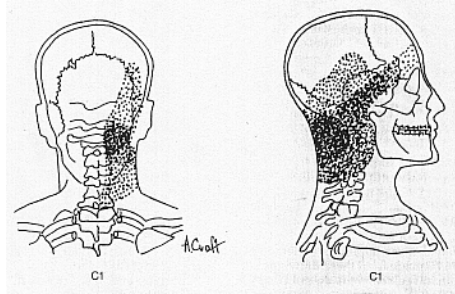
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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

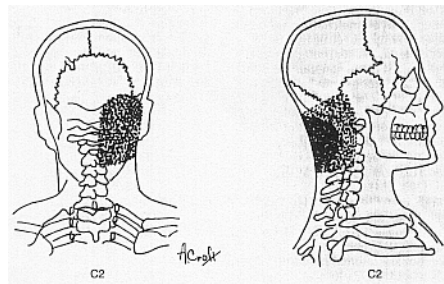
Headaches from Your Neck?

Many people do not realize that headaches are the second most common reason for a person to visit a health care practitioner. There are different types of headache but the one I most often see in my office is referred to as a "cervicogenic headache". These are most commonly due to a combination of three potential problems. The first is tight muscles in the neck and shoulders. The second is when the joints in the neck lose their mobility or flexibility and become stiff and sore, and lastly, when the nerves in the upper neck become irritated or pinched. Any one of these three or combinations of all of them can potentially cause headaches at the forehead, eyes, temples, or back of the head. Physical or emotional stress can play a major role in causing or even amplifying any preexisting problems. Examples might be emotional stress at home or work, poor posture, poor ergonomics at your computer desk, or even mild traumatic injuries involving the neck.

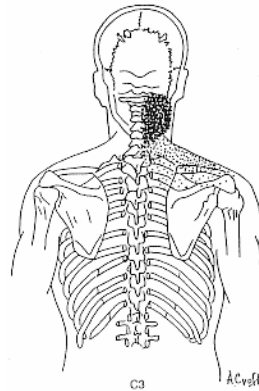
Each day, patients see their chiropractor for relief of headaches. They are most commonly due to the joints of the neck being stiff, sore, and inflamed. When this has happened, the nerves that are closely positioned to the inflamed joints also become involved. They eventually become mildly irritated, which causes them to "refer" or cause pain in and around the neck, shoulder and head. The muscles in the upper neck are also controlled by these irritated nerves, causing them to go into spasm. This will further restrict the movement of the neck and cause even more pain. The diagrams shown here (Foreman, Croft. Whiplash Injuries. 2nd ed, Williams & Wilkens, 1988.) demonstrate where the pain is typically referred in a cervicogenic headache.



Pain pattern when the 1st nerve in the neck is irritated.



Pain pattern when the 2nd nerve in the neck is irritated.



Pain pattern when the 3rd nerve in the neck is irritated.

If you are experiencing ongoing dull achey pain in any of the patterns shown in the diagrams, you are likely suffering from cervicogenic headaches. It has been very well researched that these problems respond well to conservative chiropractic care if treated properly. However, it is also very important that if your headaches are worse than you have ever experienced before, cause dizziness or blurred vision, or if they continue to get worse no matter what you do, get into see a health care professional right away.