



Waukesha County's Neurology & Sleep Solutions

262-522-3070

Pewaukee, Mukwonago & Delafield



## Neurological Education - Tension-Type Headaches

There are various causes of headaches. The major cause is due to primary headache disorders such as migraines and tension-type headaches. Very rarely are headaches a sign of a serious medical issue. Whatever the cause may be, a headache disorder can become very burdensome for patients who deal daily with the threat of a possible debilitating headache. Dr. Jochims will proficiently evaluate your particular case and through conservative management, will work with you to tailor a treatment plan specific to your needs.

### TENSION-TYPE HEADACHES

Tension-type headaches are the most common form of headaches. They are non-specific headaches, not related to vascular issues or migraines, and not related to other diseases. While the exact causes of tension headaches are still being discovered, researchers believe the cause may be related to the tightening of muscles in the back of the neck and/or scalp. Symptoms may come and go, or they may seem to never go completely away. The pain is described as a dull, aching, and non-pulsating pain; located on both sides of the head. Most often, the pain is primarily located in forehead, temples, or back of the head/neck. Often patients complain of a "tightening band-like" sensation around the neck and/or head.



### Tension-Type Headaches

Tension-type headaches are the most common form of headaches. They are non-specific and not related to vascular issues or migraines.

If headache pain is continuous, it may be time to see a specialist for help.

## Diagnosis

If pain is continuous and not responding to over-the-counter medication, it might be time to see a specialist for help. Diagnosis will be made primarily based on a comprehensive medical and social history taken by the doctor. It's important to take note of specifics surrounding your headaches - What do the symptoms feel like? Where are they located? What might be causing or triggering them? Do the symptoms go away? What makes the symptoms better?

## Treatment

As a preventative approach, your doctor may prescribe medications to be taken on a regular basis. The doctor may prescribe an antidepressant to treat your headaches. This is because antidepressants have analgesic effect. Habituating analgesic narcotics must be strictly avoided for tension-type headaches. The chronic nature of the pain, in these cases, may increase the risk that abuse will occur.

With all pain medications, it's very important for patients to be aware of the potential for abuse. When in pain, it's easy to justify taking "just one more pill", but it's important to recognize that continual overuse of medication is not only dangerous for your health, but in the case of a headache, patients may cause an increase in frequency and severity of headaches to occur. This is called an analgesic or rebound headache.

The doctor might also prescribe counseling, especially if stress is found to be a significant factor in your headaches. Physical therapy or biofeedback may also be beneficial to you. There are some actions that you can take as well to help treat your symptoms.

## What Can YOU Do?

For prevention of headaches, it's important to evaluate your lifestyle and identify areas for improvement. Regular exercise and regular, consistent rest are vital components of preserving a healthy lifestyle.

## What Can You Do?

Medical treatment for headache disorders can often be assisted by the patient in their daily actions. For prevention of headaches it's important to evaluate your lifestyle and identify areas for improvement. Regular exercise and regular, consistent rest are vital components of preserving a healthy lifestyle. Maintaining a healthy diet, including drinking lots of fluids, might also help prevent symptoms. Identify triggers for your headaches and avoid interaction with these as much as possible. Some possible triggers are include:

- Certain foods such as aged cheeses, sausages, chocolate, fermented food, MSG
- Use of alcohol
- Chemicals such as nicotine, gasoline, glue, household cleaners, perfumes, paint
- Certain emotions such as stress
- Disruption in your regular schedule such as skipping a meal or disruption in your sleep pattern
- Hormones - Many women, esp. migraine sufferers, notice symptoms tend to occur at a certain point in their menstrual cycle
- Change in environment such as when traveling or a move to a new home
- Change in weather

When interaction with certain triggers is inevitable, try to develop ways to combat these interactions. Take extra care with your health. Drink plenty of fluids, get extra rest. Minimize interaction as much as possible. When a headache is occurring, preventative measures will not help the emergent need to reduce your pain; but there are some things you can do in an acute situation to help decrease your symptoms. If you take medication at the onset of a headache, try to take the medication at the first sign of symptoms - the earlier the better! During a headache, use a cold compress, lie down in a dark quiet room, and drink fluids (suck on ice if nausea makes it difficult to drink). Try using relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, visualization of a peaceful and serene scene, progressive relaxation, or massage the muscles of your head and neck.

---

**Phone: 262-522-3070 | Fax: 262-522-3071**



© 2018 Neurological Wellness Clinic, all rights reserved.

Dr. Sean A. Jochims offers care in sleep medicine, sleep disorders, sleep apnea, CPAP machines, CPAP masks, CPAP supplies, EMG and EEG testing, spine disease (including neck / back pain and radiculopathy), muscle / nerve disease, nerve conduction studies (including carpal tunnel syndrome and neuropathies), headaches, epilepsy and movement disorders (including Parkinson's disease, tremors and Botox treatment).