

Cervicogenic Headache

A cervicogenic headache (CH) is a condition whereby pain presents on one side of the neck, usually at the base of the skull, that can refer to the head or face. It is a common chronic and frequent headache that usually begins after neck movement.

Signs and symptoms of a CH may include:

- Steady pain with no throbbing at the base of the skull.
- Head pain when coughing, sneezing or taking a deep breath.
- Pain that may last for hours or days.
- Reduced neck mobility.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Pain that stays in one spot – may be felt in the back of the neck, eye, front or side of the head.

Cervicogenic headaches are caused by problems that have occurred in the nerves, bones, joints or muscles within the neck. These problems include tight muscles, joint sprains, arthritis, damaged discs or a compressed nerves. Your osteopath will explain the most likely cause for your case.

They may also occur from your posture while sitting or standing at work or home. For example, people who work as a driver, plumber, hairdresser or desk worker may unconsciously push their chin forward which shifts their head out in front of the body. This is called a forward head posture. Sitting or standing in this position for extended periods of time places pressure on the neck and joints which then triggers a CH. It can also be produced or aggravated by poor sleep, stress or fatigue.

A cervicogenic headache can be chronic and debilitating but there are many ways to help reduce your pain and prevent it from happening in the future. Avoiding activities that worsen the pain, using heat, ice and/or pain medication such as Panadol and practicing good posture at home or work are great ways to start this. Osteopathy treatment to release and mobilise muscles and joints can also help reduce the frequency and intensity of this type of headache. Exercises to stretch and strengthen tight or weak neck or upper back muscles is another is another great and crucial step in the rehabilitation of this condition.

Your osteopath, will guide you through a tailored exercise program and provide other strategies to aid in your recovery.

