

## **DO YOU GET TENSION HEADACHES?**

The most common headaches are vascular and muscle tension headaches. Vascular headaches are a result of swelling and constricting blood vessels, and are typically accompanied by throbbing or pounding pain.

Tension headaches, caused by tense muscle  
Tension headaches are also described as a band of pressure encircling the head with the most intense pain over the eyebrows. Most people are able to function despite their tension headaches.

These are the most common type of headache that people experience. This is often related to pain and tension in the neck region. A disorder of the neck joints or the muscles that connect to the base of your skull may refer pain into your head; this is because the nerves that are in your neck are also connected to your head and face.

### **Main Causes of Tension Headaches**

Trigger points (TrPs), or muscle knots, are possibly the world's most common cause of aches and pains, and yet they are rarely diagnosed correctly. Having too many stubborn trigger points is called "myofascial pain syndrome" (MPS).

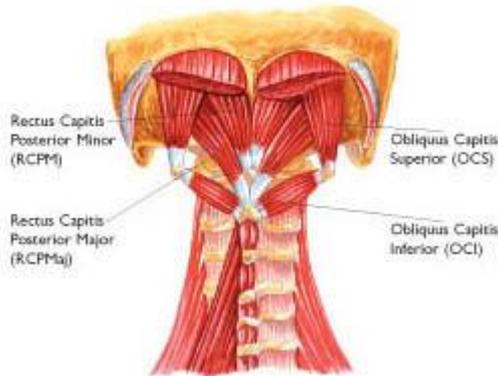
Many people that work in a sitting position like office workers are prone to these from the constant strain placed on the muscles of the neck and skull.

Other factors that can contribute to tension headaches are:

- Stress
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Holding your head in one position for a long time (like using a computer)
- Sleeping in an awkward position or in a cold room
- Eye strain
- Fatigue
- Overexertion
- Skipping meals
- Head or neck injury, even years after the injury
- Clenching your jaw or grinding your teeth (bruxism)
- Medications, including some headache medications (leading to rebound headaches)
- Arthritis

Along with many other neck muscles, the sub-occipital group work overtime to keep your head balanced on top of your spine. In particular, they initiate and control your head and neck movements. As you can imagine this can be hard work particularly if you're a big person, as your head may weigh as much as a 10-pin bowling ball, and it is resting on a foundation only about

one third as wide. Consequently, these muscles never really stop working and can sometimes become over-worked.



The sub-occipitals are also partly “antagonised” (balanced) by the jaw muscles. Generally speaking you’ve got one muscle or group of muscles that pulls one way, and then muscles on the other side of the joint that pulls the other way.

Muscle studies have shown that if the jaw muscles tighten, the sub-occipitals tighten. Both of these muscle groups routinely harbour trigger points that

cause headaches (among other things), and together they are the source of most tension headaches. Trigger points are also extremely likely to be a trigger for migraines and cluster headaches.

### **Treatment for Tension Headaches**

Regular massage including trigger point techniques and myofascial release will help relieve stress and pain in people with chronic tension headaches. Also using Positional Release Techniques (PRT) to release trigger points and lengthen the muscles that are shortened and tense will also be very effective.

PRT is a gentle manual treatment that can be used for releasing muscle pain or spasm by positioning an area of the body in such way that it induces a therapeutic physiological response on the musculoskeletal system. The area of pain is placed in its most comfortable pain free position, and this enhances beneficial neurology and circulatory system changes. It is an excellent way to release hyper-sensitive tissue easily and spontaneously. This technique uses the body’s nervous system to remind the muscles to relax.

Doing stretches for your head and neck may also help. Practicing proper posture is another important factor in reducing the number of headaches and looking at your diet is also beneficial.

For more information or to make an appointment please contact Phoenix Therapies on 9303 9111 or visit our website [www.phoenixtherapies.com.au](http://www.phoenixtherapies.com.au)

