

How to Get Permanent Relief From Chronic Tension Headaches

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In 1996 Doug and Paul formed Healthmeisters Publishing Company, which is devoted to giving people the information they need to help themselves find permanent relief from a wide variety of physical ailments.

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The Symptoms of Chronic Tension Headaches

Since you suffer from tension headaches, you'll undoubtedly recognize some of the following physical symptoms:

- chronic neck and shoulder soreness
- a persistent pounding in the back of your head, which often works its way over the top of your skull and around the sides
- twitching eyes during really severe headaches
- a continual soreness between your shoulder blades
- aching jaw and pain in your back teeth
- pain in your ears
- decreased movement in your neck - you can't turn it to the left or right without pain and you can't put your ear to a shoulder without pain, or if you can your movement is limited
- chronic fatigue; tiredness sets in before your workday is over
- when your back, neck and shoulder muscles get *really* tight, you experience numbness and a tingling down your arms and into your hands, which is often accompanied by a loss of grip strength

Unfortunately, your pain most likely goes beyond the physical. Consider the following emotional and mental symptoms:

- short-temperedness (*everything* bothers you)
- constant grouching (your friends and co-workers tell you you've changed)
- low self-esteem and self-loathing
- difficulty concentrating due to chronic pain
- decreased work productivity and efficiency

The constant pain and emotional drain will even take a toll on your appearance. Take a look at yourself in the mirror:

- are your eyes bloodshot?
- are there bags under your eyes from lack of sleep?
- is your head jutting forward and down to relieve the pain in your neck?

- are your shoulders slumped forward like the Hunchback of Notre Dame?
- does your back curve inward?
- does your stomach protrude?
- are you frowning?

You've been checked out by your doctor. The diagnosis: You suffer from chronic muscular tension headaches.

Why You Suffer From Tension Headaches

What caused this to happen? Why are your headaches so debilitating? Why are they so painful? How come they won't go away?

When they first started, a couple of aspirins did the trick. Now, however, even the expensive red, blue and green pills your doctor gave you don't provide relief. You probably believe your headaches are a result of stress. While it's true that emotional stress can settle into the neck and shoulders and cause tension headaches, most of my patients' headaches are a result of the posture they're in at work.

Unfortunately, most of today's jobs involve sitting or standing over work stations. These stations are usually in front of workers at odd angles, forcing them to stoop or slouch down.

Look around at your co-workers. Whether they're sitting at computer terminals, talking on the phone or working at drill presses, their posture is the same: slightly bent at the waist, shoulders rolled in, head pushed out.

This is an abnormal position that strains the muscles of the upper back and neck. As a result, the upper body is pulled down and forward.

To fully appreciate the effects of this poor posturing, I want you to try this experiment: With two hands, hold a gallon of water in front of your waist and stand in front of a mirror. Assume your best posture - head up, shoulders back and stomach in. See if you can stand there for five minutes.

As the seconds tick by, watch yourself carefully. Are your shoulders rolling in? Are you beginning to bend slightly at the waist? Is your head coming forward? Are your neck and shoulders starting to tense up?

Does all this look familiar? It should because this is exactly what's happening to you as you sit at your desk, work bench or computer all day. The muscles in your back, neck and shoulders are straining against the weight of your upper body. As the day wears on, strain on your muscles increases. Eventually, they begin to tire and fatigue sets in, as evidenced by the tightening and burning you feel in your neck, back and shoulders.

This tightening has a clinical term: spasm. As your muscles reach their point of exhaustion - the point at which they will no longer be able to work - the spasm increases. This is the body's way of protecting the muscles from going beyond their physiological limits. Otherwise they would tear.

The longer you sit at your desk or stand over your drill press, the more work you force your muscles to do. More work equals more fatigue, which equals more spasm. Eventually, the muscles become so tight from the spasm that two things begin to occur:

1. the nerve endings in your bones, where the muscles attach, become irritated
2. blood flow to the muscles becomes restricted (a spasmed muscle squeezes the arteries that supply it with blood; it's like stepping on a turned-on garden hose)

This is how the pain starts.

All you need to do is stop straining your muscles and restart the blood flow. The problem is - if you're like most people - you continue to strain your muscles, even after work.

Think about it. After work you go home and feed the kids, mow the lawn, clean the house, do the laundry. As you perform these chores, what's your posture like? Be honest!

I'll bet it's lousy. Then, when you can finally relax, what do you do? You slouch in your favorite chair, with your shoulders rolled in and head forward. Then you go to bed and, in the morning, you start this vicious cycle all over again.

You probably think that eight hours of sleep would allow your tired, fatigued muscles to relax and return to their normal state. However, if you're sleeping in the wrong position, you're aggravating your muscles even more (I'll talk about sleeping in a proper position later).

Yes, some of these muscles may have relaxed overnight, but the spasms are not all gone. This means that it won't take as long for these muscles to begin to fatigue and spasm (or knot up) again. Now your headaches and neck aches return earlier - and last longer.

Why Your Tension Headaches Won't Go Away

What you may not realize is that the continual strain you're putting on your neck and shoulder muscles is causing them to tear. This tearing starts at a microscopic level - too small to see, but large enough to feel. The soreness in your neck and shoulders the next day indicates microscopic tearing. This tearing is not a problem per se, provided you allow your muscles to recover.

It's like lifting weights. Take bicep curls, for instance. You do bicep curls until you can't lift the weight any more (fatigue). By working the muscle to fatigue, you tear it slightly. The soreness you feel the next day tells you the muscle is slightly torn. If you let the muscle rest before you lift again, it doesn't return to normal; it goes beyond its normal state and gets stronger. However, if you were to lift every day to the point of fatigue, without giving your muscle a chance to rest, the muscle wouldn't get stronger. Instead, it would begin to break down and get weaker.

It's the same with your neck and shoulder muscles; they never get enough rest to recover fully. Not even a relaxing weekend is enough to do the trick - two days of rest isn't enough time for them to recover from five days of abuse.

Because you're not allowing your neck and shoulder muscles enough time to relax and recover, your spasms never really go away. The reason is that your body begins to repair the tearing in the muscle tissue while your muscles are still spasmed. It does this by laying down scar tissue over the tears. It's like a scab over a wound.

Again, that's not a problem as long as you give your muscles time to recover. Assuming you do, your body will begin to break down the

scar tissue and your muscles will return to normal.

But if they're forced to endure daily straining, this doesn't happen. Instead, the spasms remain constant. Worse, your muscles are continually torn.

This results in scar tissue being laid down between the spasmed muscle fibers. When that happens, the spasmed muscles can't relax even if they wanted to because the scar tissue is binding them together.

Those knots you feel when you run your hands over these muscles? They're the result of this scar tissue. That's why your headaches never really go completely away - and why they come back earlier. That's also why muscle relaxers usually don't work for people who suffer from chronic tension headaches - their muscles are physically incapable of relaxing.

As your muscles get tighter and tighter, as more spasm and scarring takes place, your symptoms change. Your headaches become more frequent. They're more intense and longer lasting. The pounding in the back of your head now comes over the top of your skull. Your forehead hurts. Your eyes may even twitch.

As the muscles around your neck fatigue and tighten, you may develop earaches. On really bad days, your back teeth will ache. Eventually these muscles will spasm so much that they'll pinch off the nerves that go down to your arms, resulting in numbness and/or tingling down your arms and to your fingers. Eventually you'll lose some of your grip strength.

If you've reached this state, something needs to be done...but what?

Forget about muscle relaxers; I've already said why they won't work. All but the strongest medication will prove ineffective (even if such medication provides relief, it will be short-lived - I've had patients tell me that *nothing* relieves their pain).

How to Eliminate Tension Headaches - For Good!

Yes, I've painted a pretty depressing picture. But have hope and be strong; you're not doomed to a lifetime of chronic pain. You can get rid of your muscle tension headaches and keep them from coming back...permanently!

Two things are all that are necessary to get you complete relief. They need to be done at about the same time.

First, you must eliminate the cause of your muscle tension. If you're like most people, the root cause of your muscle tension is the poor posture that you're in at work all day.

Be honest! When you're sitting at your computer or desk, or standing at your work table or bench, are your shoulders hunched or rolled in? Is your head forward? Is your stomach out? Is there a slight lean forward at your hips?

You know the answer. And if the answer is yes (you know it is!) then you're following a recipe for chronic tension headaches.

You *must* reverse your poor posture! As long as you continue to slouch, there will be tension in your neck and shoulder muscles.

The second thing you need to do is to increase blood flow to those tense neck and shoulder muscles.

Let's assume you have a tension headache right now and you want relief...*right now!* Okay, I'm going to give you the details on how to increase the blood flow to your tense neck and shoulder muscles. This will provide some instant relief. Then I'll discuss at length how you can reverse your poor posture, since reversing your poor posture will prevent your headaches from ever coming back.

How to Provide Some Instant Relief to Tense Neck and Shoulder Muscles

Now, remember that a tight, spasmed muscle squeezes down on the blood vessels that feed it. Since blood provides the muscle with the oxygen and nutrients it needs to relax and recover, this squeezing prevents it from ever fully relaxing and recovering.

Applying heat to the muscle is the best and easiest way to increase blood flow to it. Moist heat is best, as it penetrates furthest into the muscle tissue. Try any or all of these suggestions:

- take a hot shower
- relax in a hot tub or jacuzzi

- apply a towel soaked in hot water (you can heat a wet towel in a microwave - just remember to ring it out first!)
- apply a moist heating pad

While not as effective as moist heat, dry heat will also provide relief. You can use a regular heating pad. There are also gel packs available that you heat in your microwave (you can find them at most drug stores).

Whichever source or combination of sources you choose, the more heat you can stand, the better.

Unfortunately, applying heat to spasmed neck and shoulder muscles only provides temporary relief from tension headaches.

My patients often attest to that. Many of them have told me that they experience complete relief from their tension headaches while they're in the shower, but that the tightness and pain return as soon as they get out.

Why is that? Because spasmed muscles don't get a large enough flow of blood through the main blood vessels that lead to them. Applying heat brings additional blood to the muscles by opening different routes via subsidiary blood vessels. In order to keep the blood flowing to the spasmed muscles, you need to keep heating them. The longer you heat these muscles, the more oxygen and nutrients they get to help them relax and recover.

So, take an extra long shower in the morning. Buy a microwavable gel pack and take it to work. Use it on breaks and/or during your lunch hour, or - if at all possible - during work. When you're at home, wrap a heating pad on a low setting around your neck while you read or watch T.V. Wear a turtleneck sweater to bed. Some of my patients have even slept with a heating pad on all night (if you choose to do this, leave it on the lowest possible setting so you don't burn yourself).

As I've said, heat provides relief but has its limitations:

- you can't stay in the shower forever (the hot water is going to eventually run out!)
- you're not always going to have a heating pad, or a towel and microwave oven, handy
- while turtlenecks look good, they're impractical in hot weather

No, I'm afraid that applying heat to spasmed neck and shoulder muscles is only treating the symptoms of your problem. For permanent relief from chronic tension headaches, you must get rid of the spasm.

How to Use Acupressure to Get Rid of Spasms in Your Neck and Shoulder Muscles

If your headaches don't happen every day, or if your neck only tightens up at work, you may get relief from a technique called acupressure. It's sort of like acupuncture, but there are no needles involved and you don't need to know specific anatomical points.

What you're going to do is stimulate muscle "trigger points." A trigger point is an area where you have or have had pain. If you stimulate that area, you'll cause more pain.

Yes, I know that sounds counterproductive, but bear with me; it'll make sense to you shortly.

First, you need to find a trigger point to stimulate. That's easy. Take your hand and run it over the muscles in the back of your neck and down the base of your neck to your shoulders. They're probably tight, so you may have to push into the muscles a little bit. Besides being sore and tight, you'll feel little lumps or knots. If you push these knots...WOW!

Sore, huh? That sore knot is a trigger point.

Now comes the fun part. Using the tip of a finger - the one that's going to reach the trigger point and provide you with the most leverage - roll over the trigger point until you find the tip. Push your finger in *as hard you can*, right through to the trigger point.

Yes, it's going to hurt - in fact, it's going to be extremely painful. Nevertheless, I want you to continue pushing until:

1. you can't stand the pain, or
2. you feel the trigger point "pop," or dissolve (you won't actually hear it pop, but you will feel a little explosion in your muscle)

A tingling sensation may spread out from the trigger point. That's normal. Once the pain subsides, your headache will most likely

either significantly decrease in intensity or disappear. If you have more than one knot, or trigger point (as is likely), you'll need to stimulate each one.

Sometimes, because of the position of the trigger points, you won't be able to get a good angle on them with your finger. This will prevent you from being able to apply enough force to dissolve them.

If that happens, you need to enlist the help of a good, trustworthy friend, or your spouse/significant other.

When using acupressure on yourself to dissolve trigger points, don't worry about hurting yourself or, if someone's using acupressure on you, someone hurting you. The worst thing that can happen is you won't be able to "pop" the trigger point. In that case, wait until the area of the trigger point calms down, then repeat the procedure.

While it doesn't work 100 percent of the time, I've gotten great results most of the times that I've used this technique on my patients.

If you suffer from daily tension headaches and are starting to have other, more serious symptoms - like tingling in your arms or weakness in your hands - acupressure isn't going to be very effective because you have too much spasm over too wide an area. Fortunately, there's a second technique for permanently getting rid of these spasms.

How to "Strip" Away Wide Areas of Spasm in Your Neck and Shoulder Muscles

When tension headaches get this bad, you obviously have a lot of spasm and scar tissue. To break down this scar tissue and drive the spasms away, you must use a deep tissue massage technique. I must emphasize the word *deep*.

This procedure isn't for wimps. You'll need a high tolerance for pain in order for this massage to be effective. However, it will work!

I must admit that I've bruised some patients using this technique. Many have reported being sore for several days afterwards. But, their payoff has been rich: Every one of them got relief from their tension headaches! Every patient I've treated was happy he or she endured it.

While you must be prepared for the pain the treatment causes, it may be of some comfort to know that it only lasts 3-5 minutes. And when it's over, you're headache's gone!

It's best to have someone perform this treatment on you. A trusted friend will do (it's quite easy to administer this type of massage, as you'll soon see).

While you might be able to perform this massage on yourself (once again, the aforementioned Backnobber will help), it's unlikely that you'll be able to get the leverage you need to dig deeply enough into the affected muscle tissues.

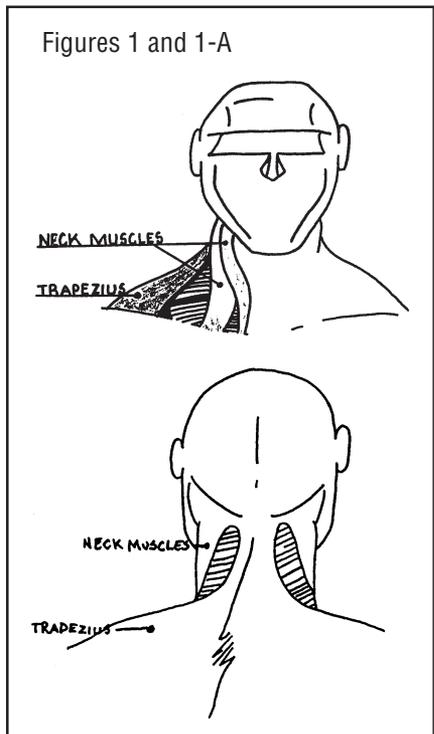
Digging deeply into the affected muscles is of the utmost importance. If you don't, then the scar tissue doesn't break down, the muscles don't relax, and you still have a headache.

When I perform this massage on a patient, I work the sides of the neck and upper back (these upper back muscles are the trapezius muscles, or "traps" - see Figures 1 and 1-A).

I have the patient wear a large, loose T-shirt or some other article of clothing that allows me access to these muscles. You need to be wearing a similarly loose article of clothing.

After you've changed into a loose T-shirt or something similar, you must sit up in a low or medium-backed chair. The person doing the massage should stand behind you, thumbs ready.

That person needs to rub a little lotion into your neck and upper shoulders - the areas to be massaged. This will allow his thumbs to slide over your skin. Otherwise, you'll end up with burns on your neck.



Now it's time to begin. In one continuous motion, the person doing the massage must push his thumb -left thumb if working the left side of your neck, right thumb for the right side - into the muscles right under your ear and, while pushing *deeply*, run the thumb all the way down to the base of your neck (see Figure 2).

I call this "stripping" the muscles. It's sort of like stripping the covering off a wire. Have him strip the same muscle three times, continuing each time to dig as deeply as possible.

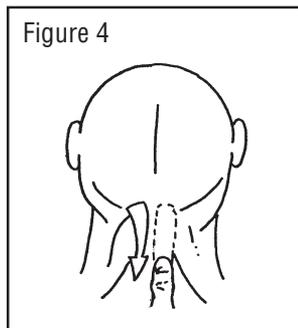
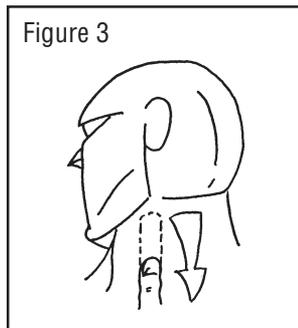
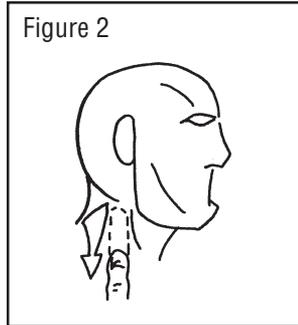
(A note to the person performing the massage: Ignore the cries of pain of the person you're treating! Don't heed his or her pleas to be gentler. A nice, gentle, relaxing massage might be okay at the spa, but it will *not* get rid of a tension headache - remember, you were asked to do this!).

Okay, now its time for the person doing the massage to move to the neck muscles right next to the ones he's just finished stripping. These muscles start on the skull, behind the ear.

Again, have him apply a little lotion first. Then, like before, have him push and strip down on the muscles with his thumb three times (see Figure 3).

The last part of your neck to be stripped is the area right next to your spine. These muscles will probably be the tightest.

Have the person treating you start at the base of your skull, (this area is usually right above the hair line). Before he starts, make sure he finds the little bump there. Then, if you have a lot of hair, pull it up so it's out of his way.



The person massaging you needs to start as high as possible on these muscles. Have him push and strip down on them (after, of course, he's applied some lotion first). Like before, this procedure needs to be repeated three times (see Figure 4).

A Note of Reassurance

As you read this, you may be wondering if this massage can do any permanent damage or hurt you significantly. I must tell you that it's not uncommon for me to make my patients' skin red from the friction that this treatment causes. I've also bruised a few people, causing their skin to turn black and blue. I've even popped small capillaries (blood vessels) in some patients, causing tiny red dots to form right below their skin. However, I must stress that I've never caused any permanent damage to any of the hundreds of patients I've worked with. That's why I'm sharing this technique with you. Yes, it works, but it's also a very safe technique. The worst thing that can possibly happen is that you'll bruise and be sore for a few days. In fact, the majority of my patients are sore for a few days, especially after the first treatment.

Now that I've reassured you, let's get back to getting your muscles dug out. In fact, since you can't really get hurt by having your muscles dug out, they need to be dug even deeper!

And they're going to need to be dug deeper because the next muscle group to be dug is your trapezius. These are the thick muscles on top of your shoulders, and between your shoulder joints and neck. They stabilize your shoulders, as well as supporting and moving your neck and head.

I divide these muscles into three areas, since my thumbs can't cover the whole area at once.

Have the person massaging you start with the area just above your collarbone. After he's applied a little lotion there, have him push in at your shoulder and strip toward your neck. This needs to be repeated three times (see Figure 5).

Now have him move to the middle, or top, of the trapezius. These muscles will be thick and knotted. After another application of lotion, have him push in hard and dig deeply, stripping from your shoulder toward your neck. Again, this needs to be done three times (see Figure 6).

Now it's time to move to the last area to be dug, your upper back, right below the top of your shoulder. Again, after another application of lotion, have him start from your shoulder, this time pushing and stripping toward your spine. This needs to be done three times. (see Figure 7).

After he's dug out one side of your neck and traps, have him dig out the other side. These are the muscle groups - the neck and trapezius - that I usually work on to relieve my patients' tension headaches. As I said, the entire treatment only takes three or four minutes (not counting time-outs to allow patients a chance to catch their breaths).

If there are other areas in the middle of the back that are sore or tender, feel free to work these muscles as well (note - if you want to work or have work done on the mid-back muscles make sure the person being treated is lying face down for maximum leverage).

Right after the treatment, apply some heat on the area that was just dug out. This is to increase blood flow and relax the muscles. You can use a heating pad or a gel pack heated in a microwave. If you prefer, you can take a hot shower.

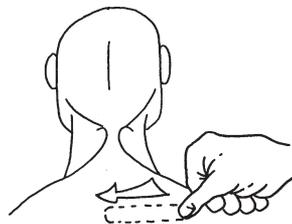
Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Due to the intensity of the treatment, I usually perform it on a patient only once a week. On rare occasions, a patient will be so tight he won't feel my digging too much, despite the fact that I've dug for all I'm worth. In such a case, I'll dig him again in three or four days - but only if there's no soreness from the previous treatment.

On the other hand, some patients I've dug out were still bruised and sore a week later. In these cases, I'll wait until their bruises and soreness have gone away before retreating them.

You must do the same; don't dig out someone who's still bruised and sore and don't allow anyone to dig you out if you're still bruised and sore.

With this treatment, you'll begin to see immediate results. However, one treatment won't permanently eliminate your tension headaches. I tell first-time patients that they'll need anywhere from six to sixteen treatments.

Bottom line: The longer you've had the more severe symptoms of tension headaches, the more treatments you'll need to permanently get rid of them.

Another thing to consider is that pain during the treatment is inversely proportional to the number of treatments you've already had (sorry, I couldn't resist throwing in a little scientific jargon!). In other words, the digging will become less painful each time you have it done - I guarantee it!

How to Keep Your Tension Headaches From Coming Back

Okay, now you're working to relax the muscles in your neck and shoulders. You're also undergoing treatment to get rid of scar tissue.

Great! But there are other things you need to do so that once you're loose, you stay loose...which means you're headaches won't come back...ever!

So how do you prevent them from coming back? Will they come back?

Well, it's just like any other injury. If you duplicate the mechanism that caused your injury, then the injury will come back. Therefore,

the idea is to do some preventative maintenance so that your headaches don't return.

The headaches in and of themselves won't return unless you put yourself in the same kind of position or posturing that you've done in the past. So, what you need to do is start correcting the cause of your tension headaches - your posture.

As I've mentioned before, most of my patients' tension headaches are caused by habitual poor posture, a posture they maintain all day at work.

Many of my patients believe their headaches are stress-related. While it's true that stress often settles in the neck and can account for some headaches, it's not responsible for the long lasting, intense headaches that drive people to seek treatment (headaches caused by stress won't usually cause a numbness or tingling down the hands and/or a loss of grip strength).

In order to prevent the more debilitating tension headaches from returning, you need to continue with the deep tissue massage once a week, until you don't feel intense pain when whoever's doing the massage digs into your neck (yes, you should feel his thumbs digging into you, but not to the point where it's extremely painful like it was during the first few treatments).

It's especially important to continue this deep tissue massage if you notice any of your symptoms returning after say, several days or so, like:

- numbness or tingling down the arms
- loss of grip strength
- pain in the ears or back teeth
- a return of intense headaches

You also need to assume a military posture. This posture has to be maintained the whole day, whether you're sitting, standing or walking. Why? Because the military posture doesn't overload the musculature. When you're in this posture, you're upright. Your shoulders are back. Your head is up and back. Your stomach is in and tight (your chest needs to be out a little bit, too).

(Not sure if you're assuming this posture correctly? Then stand sideways to a full-length mirror. You should be able to draw a line

from your ear through your shoulder, hip, knee, and finally through your ankle. This line should be straight, with no curve at all - see Figure 8).

By keeping your head up, shoulders back and stomach tight, you're taking all the pressure off of the muscles that have a tendency to fatigue and spasm - the muscles in the back of your neck and shoulders (particularly the trapezius). As you now know, your headaches occur when these muscles become overloaded and spasm.

When you're in a proper posture at work as a course of habit, these muscles won't be under any undue strain during the day. As a result, you'll be able to sit, stand, walk and perform all of your daily activities free of pain.

However, when you're first starting to incorporate the military posture, you'll have to do a couple of simple stretches and exercises in order to get your body used to that proper positioning.

Patients who have developed poor posture tell me that it hurts when they try to stand up straight and pull their shoulders back.

Yes, it will hurt you, too - at first. There are several reasons:

- Being stoop-shouldered with your head tilted forward all day (for many years, most likely!) has resulted in the adaptation of the musculature in your back to that position. By assuming a correct posture, you're now taking these muscles and forcing them to go in the opposite direction that they're used to going.
- These back muscles are longer than they should be because of your previously poor posture; they've become stretched out. By practicing proper posture, you're now contracting them when you pull your shoulders back. This contraction causes pain.
- The muscles themselves aren't strong enough to hold your torso back. By having hunched over for so many years, you've been

Figure 8



stretching those muscles. They haven't had to work to keep you in an upright position. Now they do.

- As you pull your shoulders back, you're going to be stretching out your chest muscles. This will cause pain in these muscles because they're used to being in a shortened, contracted state.

Allow me to explain this last point.

There are two muscles in your chest, one big, one small. The big one's called pectorals major. The small one's under the big one and is called pectorals minor.

Both of these muscles insert into and onto the shoulder joint. When you maintain a bent-over posture, as you might by working at a computer terminal or work bench all day, you tend to roll your shoulders in. The result: Your chest muscles shorten.

At the same time, the muscles in the shoulders and upper back are being stretched and lengthened. So, as you leave your chest muscles in a shortened position for extended periods, those muscles adapt to that shortened position and become tighter.

Here's an analogy. Let's say you've broken your arm and it's in a sling for several weeks. Finally, your doctor removes the sling and tells you to move your arm.

You can't! Of course, eventually you can, but you'll most likely find that several weeks will pass before you have full range of motion. That's because your arm has adapted to being in an abnormal position. Only diligent exercise will allow it to regain its former flexibility and strength.

The same thing is true with your shoulder and chest muscles. As you stoop over, the shoulder muscles become stretched out, while the chest muscles shorten. However, when you assume the military posture, you shorten and strengthen your back, while at the same time you stretch and strengthen your chest.

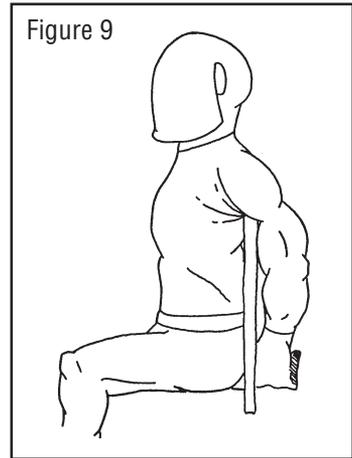
An Exercise For Your Chest to Prevent Your Tension Headaches From Coming Back

One of the best exercises to start with is the behind-the-back stretch. It can be done sitting or standing.

If you're going to sit, sit in a chair with backing that comes halfway up your back. Hook your arms over the back of the chair and pull your shoulder blades together. As you do this, make sure you stick your chest out. As this is very important, I want you to exaggerate a little bit. Make sure you keep your head up, too.

Pull your shoulder blades together until you feel a pull in your shoulder joints. Don't go overboard on this; you don't want to cause any pain. Now hold that position for three minutes (see Figure 9).

Don't cheat and quit early, as the length of this stretch is very important. The reason is that, despite what you've read in books and in the popular press, short stretches don't promote permanent flexibility.



Why Short Stretches Don't Promote Permanent Flexibility

If you've been on a stretching program for any length of time, you're probably disappointed with the results of your efforts. Chances are you aren't getting any more flexible or looser. If anything, I'll bet you're getting tighter.

Why is that? If you've been on a stretching program for a long time, shouldn't you be getting more flexible?

The reason you're not getting more flexible is because you're not doing the stretches properly; you're not holding your stretches long enough.

Allow me to explain a few things about your muscles. They basically have two distinct properties: a plastic property and an elastic property.

The elastic property is analogous to stretching a rubber band. You stretch a rubber band and it expands. When you release the stretch, it

snaps back into place. The plastic property is analogous to stretching Silly Putty. When you release the stretch of Silly Putty, it remains stretched out.

All the connective tissue in your body has a combination of these plastic and elastic properties. These properties are collectively known as the viscoelastic property of your tissues.

It's also important to understand that you don't really stretch muscle tissue itself. What you stretch is the connective tissue that holds all your muscle fibers together, which combine at the ends to form tendons. So you're actually stretching tendons and connective tissue to gain flexibility.

Now, any number of research studies over the years have shown that in order to increase the plastic property of connective tissues and tendons, you need to do a low-intensity, prolonged stretch. And that's the whole point to the behind-the-back stretch.

So, to reiterate, what you're going to do is hook your arms over the back of a chair and squeeze your shoulder blades together. You want to feel the stretch, but not cause any pain. Hold this stretch for a prolonged period, about three minutes.

Now, if during that time the muscles in your back begin to tighten up because of fatigue, or if you feel pain in your shoulders or chest area, then you need to back off from the intensity of the stretch. Don't stop it entirely, just back off a little bit until the pain goes away.

You'll undoubtedly feel some discomfort in your back and shoulders when you first begin this stretching program - that's okay, but don't endure pain.

If you don't have a chair with a back that you can hook your arms over, or if you move around a lot during the day, I suggest that you make yourself a stretching stick. Get an old broom handle, or go to a hardware store and get yourself a thick wooden dowel about three feet long. Paint it some outrageous color, a color that you're not going to be able to miss.

This stretching stick will function like the back of a chair. Put the stick behind your arms and hook your arms over the stick (if you do it right, you'll look like you're in shackles; see Figure 10).

You can walk around like this at your shop or office, or you can just

stand there. It really doesn't matter. Just make sure that you squeeze your shoulder blades together and keep your head up and chest back, pulling until you can feel your muscles begin to stretch (obviously, you can - and should - do this at home, too).

More than any other stretching exercise, this behind-the-back stretch, either with a chair or stretching stick, will do you the most good (you can also simply stand and lock your arms behind you and pull your shoulder blades back).

Of course, there are other ways to stretch your chest muscles out. If you want to explore some of these alternative stretches, that's fine. There are a number of books available that will provide examples. (The most important thing is to remember that whatever stretch you choose to do, make sure it's done at low intensity. Don't cause any pain and hold it for three minutes)

Figure 10



An Exercise for Your Mid and Upper Back

As you begin to loosen up your chest muscles, your shoulders are going to start to roll back a little bit more. So, the next thing you need to do is strengthen the muscles in your back. This will help hold up your shoulder girdle so you can pull your shoulders back and maintain them in that position all day.

It's very important to remember that in order to keep tension headaches away, your back, shoulder and chest muscles need to function in the proper position as long as you're up. For most of us, that's 16-18 hours a day.

Not only do you have to strengthen these muscles, you have to work on their endurance as well. Obviously, they're going to need a lot of endurance to hold you upright all day.

Probably the best exercise for strengthening the muscles of your mid and upper back is a seated rowing exercise. You can do this exercise in a number of ways.

If you have a rowing machine, use it. Emphasize the pullback and really stretch out the shoulders and chest as you pull and squeeze your shoulder blades together.

If you don't have access to a rowing machine, a simple, inexpensive alternative is to get an old inner tube or one of those therapeutic bands that are available in sporting goods stores (they're like giant rubber bands). Or, you can simply get some old tubing, like the inner tube of an old bicycle tire.

Sit on the floor, with your legs out in front of you. Take your tubing, theraband, or old bicycle tube, hook it over your feet and duplicate a rowing motion. Pull back, making sure to keep your shoulders, back and head up, and squeeze your shoulder blades together as you pull the tubing toward you. This is simply a very basic rowing exercise.

To keep things simple, do this exercise until the muscles in your back begin to burn slightly. That burning sensation indicates that you've reached the fatigue point of those muscles. It's almost the same burning sensation you feel about midday or late afternoon at work - the burning sensation that happens right before your tension headaches kick in.

When your muscles begin to burn, quit and note how long you did the exercise. If, for example, you did the exercise for two minutes before your muscles began to burn, then your goal should be to increase that time by about 15-20 seconds. Each time you do the exercise, try to improve your performance by that amount of time.

When you do this exercise, pull back until you come to an upright position, then pull your arms back as far as you can. Make sure you're squeezing your shoulder blades in. Don't do the exercise rapidly, but keep up a good pace.

Your goal is the same as it would be for any other weight lifting or aerobic activity - you want to gradually increase your performance until you reach your target. That target is to be able to do this for 10 minutes three times a week.

Abdominal Exercises You Must Practice to Keep Your Tension Headaches From Coming Back

One of the other muscle groups you need to work on is your abdominals. These muscles help stabilize your back and hold in your internal organs.

If you've been slouching all your life while you sit and walk, you've assumed a slightly bent-over posture. This has taken your abdominal muscles off line. By having taken your abdominal muscles off line, you've negated the effect of these muscles. The result: an increased pull on your back. That's why you're sore and stiff at the end of the day, even though you've only just been sitting or walking.

Working your abdominal muscles will take care of that problem - but only if you exercise them properly.

Recent research sheds some new light on the way you should be working your abdominal muscles to get them to properly support your upper body.

I'm sure you've seen pictures of body builders or elite athletes with washboard stomachs. In athletic circles, such stomachs are known as six-packs. That's because in the absence of fat, in well-defined abdominal muscles there are six little squares that are apparent in the musculature. Those muscles are called the erectus abdominus, which are most effectively developed by doing your traditional sit-ups or abdominal crunches.

It's long been believed that strong, well-developed stomach muscles are important to taking pressure off the lower back.

However, recent research - in particular some EMG studies - shows that during most activities the erectus abdominus muscles don't function very much (EMG is an electromyograph - it measures muscle function during exercise). These studies indicate that even though the erectus abdominus muscles support some of the internal organs, they don't contribute to the stabilization of the torso and lower back as much as was previously thought.

This research also shows that the oblique muscles - the ones often called "love handles" when they're possessed by someone who's out of shape - are the ones that are chiefly responsible for stabilizing the torso and lower back.

Most people neglect the internal and external oblique muscles when they work out, concentrating instead on doing crunches or sit-ups in order to help develop the erectus abdominus.

Yes, they look great when they pop out, but there's an easier way to get that effect - just eliminate body fat in the abdominal region!

Basically, what science is telling us is that we're wasting our time by doing crunches or sit-ups because they really don't work the muscles that support the lower back and torso - the obliques.

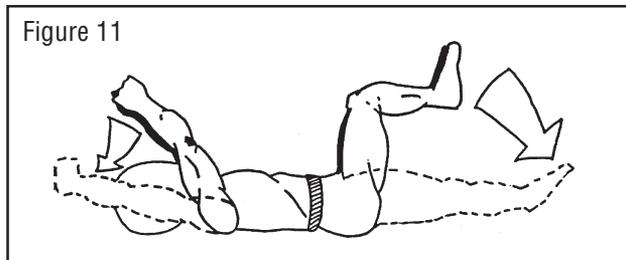
There are, however, two abdominal exercises that work the obliques well. If you stick with these two, you'll develop your oblique muscles, which will then be better able to stabilize your back and torso and allow you to maintain a correct upright posture all day.

The first exercise is to lie on your back. Now flex your hips and knees so that you're in a 90-90 position. In other words, both your hips and knees are at 90 degrees. Your elbows should be slightly out to your sides and your arms should be raised, forming another 90-degree angle so that the arms are upright.

Now keep your hips and knees flexed and raise your arms over your head, while at the same time extend one leg straight out in front of you. Then bring your arms back to their original position and, simultaneously, bring the leg back to its original position. Now repeat the exercise with your other leg, while, again, raising both arms over your head (see Figure 11).

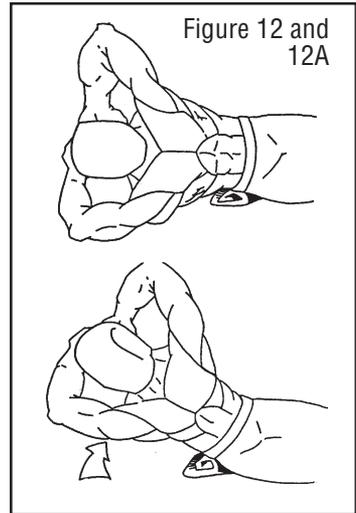
Essentially, what you're doing is stretching out your body one leg at a time, but using both arms at the same time. Do this exercise until the abdominal muscles begin to burn - the fatigue point. You need to do this exercise daily.

The second exercise is a side-lying raise. What you do is lie on your side, roll up a towel and stick it underneath your hip.



Then (if you're lying on your left side), put your right arm behind your head and try to raise your torso up sideways until your shoulders clear the ground (see Figures 12 and 12-A).

Don't worry if your obliques aren't strong enough, or if you have a little excess fat around your mid-section that doesn't allow you to move too much. As long as you begin the movement, you should be able to feel the contraction of the oblique muscle. As long as the muscle's contracting, it's working, which means you're doing the exercise properly.



Again, I want you to stop when you feel a burning in the muscle. Then turn over and repeat on the opposite side. As with the other exercise for your obliques that I discussed, you need to do this exercise every day.

Strategies for Improving Your Posture at Work

As I've already mentioned, most of the patients who come to see me for relief from tension headaches suffer from them because of poor posture - the positions they put themselves in during the day. It's not so much a matter of their activity level, it's exactly what position they're in when they perform their daily work activities.

If you're a computer programmer, you sit at a desk in a chair, probably with your seat too high, your table too high, or the monitor adjusted at an odd angle, which forces you to crane your neck out

The same thing happens if you're a secretary. When you answer the phone, your shoulders probably come forward when you have to take messages because you have to write on your desk.

If you're an executive, you're at your desk reading all day, or sitting at meetings. The same thing happens - you sit with your shoulders forward, your head slightly bent.

If you work in a factory, you're probably bent over a machine, work

bench, or some kind of drill press, or you're doing work that forces you to bend forward so you can manipulate your hands to utilize the tools that you work with.

It's this positioning that you're in all day that causes your muscles to get fatigued. The chest muscles tighten. The back muscles get stretched out. If you stretch your back muscles by throwing your body weight forward, not only are you stretching them, you're making them work harder. It's analogous to holding a weight in your hand. After awhile, even though you're not lifting it, your arm begins to get tired. It's stretched out.

The same thing happens with the muscles in your upper back, shoulders and neck when you maintain awkward positions at work all day. As the work day progresses, these muscles have to work harder and harder to hold your upper body up. After awhile they begin to fatigue and spasm. As they spasm, they begin to form knots. The knots become painful and shut off blood flow, which causes more spasm and more knots and more shutting off of blood flow...

The result is the vicious cycle I've been talking about.

What you need to do is adjust your posture at work. Get yourself in the military posture - sitting and standing straight, with your back upright and erect, shoulders back, head up, your chest not quite out (but to you it will appear to be) and your stomach in. You need to walk like this and sit like this.

I cannot overemphasize how important this is. ***If you don't develop the habit of sitting and walking in an upright position, you'll never completely cure yourself of tension headaches!***

The greatest danger is probably in sitting, because as you fatigue your shoulders will slump and your head will come forward; your abdominals will protrude and your back will slouch a bit.

It will take some effort to get used to sitting in a proper posture and maintaining that posture throughout the day. Expect it, yet be strong. Remember, you're trying to break a bad habit you've had most of your life - maybe all of your life. You'll undoubtedly catch yourself slinking back to your familiar slouch - often. Don't worry about it - just reposition yourself to a proper posture every time you forget.

Fortunately, there are some simple steps you can implement to make it easier for you to develop sitting properly as a force of habit.

Some Simple Steps to Help You Develop a Good Sitting Posture

First of all, if you're going to sit all day, make sure you have a good chair. The seat of the chair should support your buttocks and the back of your legs. It should stop short of your knees and you should be able to fit all of your buttocks over it.

If you're a little bit bigger and your buttocks and the sides of your legs hang over the seat, then obviously the seat's not big enough for you and it won't provide proper support. In that case, you'll need a bigger seat.

Make sure there's a back to your chair and that that back provides support, not only to the lumbar area, but up through the middle of your back. Also, make sure that the back of your chair wraps around enough so that it holds all of your back muscles in place (on some chairs the backs are too small, supporting only a portion of the middle back).

It's also important to make sure that your chair allows you to rock back a bit, yet maintains an upright position.

(I've seen chairs that put you in a slightly forward position, which forces you to bend forward. This puts a tremendous amount of stress and stretch on your lower back. Worse, it makes it easier for you to slouch or slump forward.)

Make sure that the height of your chair allows your feet to sit flat on the floor. This is critical.

Here's why: Taller people's feet will sit flat on the floor, but if their seats are adjusted too low then their legs aren't straight out and supported underneath the chair. In this case, the support actually comes from bottom of their feet, rather than from the seat of the chair. Obviously, this is no good, so if you're taller make sure that your seat is adjusted so that your feet not only rest flat on the floor, but your legs are straight out

If you're short and your seat is adjusted so that your feet don't rest flat on the floor, then there will be a lot of pressure on the back of your legs. This will cut off blood flow and nerve conduction to your lower legs.

Whether you're tall, short, or of average height, you must also consider the positioning of your desk. As with your chair, your desk must be at the right height for you if you're to work in a proper posture.

Here's a simple test. Reach toward your desk. Now look at your elbows. Are they at a 90-degree angle?

They should be. If they're less than 90 degrees, then your arms are up too high, which means the desk is too high for you. If your elbows are at an angle greater than 90 degrees when you reach for your desk, then it's too low.

The proper positioning of your desk or work surface is also critical, not only for your back muscles - any surface that is too high or low forces you to adjust your shoulder musculature and causes extra strain - but for your hands as well. An improperly positioned desk or work surface puts them at risk for developing carpal tunnel syndrome, especially if you work at a keyboard all day (I won't go into carpal tunnel syndrome now; I address that subject in detail in a special report - details for ordering it are available at the end of this booklet).

Stretching Exercises to Help Your Muscles Adapt to a Proper Posture

When you're at work, you also need frequent breaks. This is especially true if you sit at a desk or computer. Sitting there for several hours without breaks will inevitably cause you to develop strained back and neck muscles.

Every 15-20 minutes or so, all you need to do is take your hands away from your desk, lean back in your chair and do the behind-the-back stretch I talked about before. Just put your arms around the back of your chair and try and squeeze your shoulder blades together so that you stretch out your chest muscles. At the same time, keep your head back so that you stretch out the front of your body. As I've said, whenever you do this (or any) stretch, try to hold it for three minutes.

Obviously, this will cut into your work production time. Your work load may prevent you from holding this stretch that long. If that's the case, hold it for 40 seconds or so. While not the optimum time frame, even that will take a tremendous amount of pressure off of your back.

Without exception, all the patients I've introduced this stretch to have been amazed at how much better it makes them feel. So, do this stretch every 15 or 20 minutes. Then, maybe once an hour, you should get up and walk to the water cooler and back, or to an elevator (remember, head up and shoulders back!) or to another floor. This will help restore circulation to the upper and lower body.

Just remember, muscles that are tight from having been in one position too long will cut off circulation to themselves. As I mentioned before, it's like stepping on a garden hose. Muscles fatigue faster if blood flow to them is restricted.

There may be times where your neck muscles begin to tighten back up after a break or quick stretch. If this happens, you have three options.

The first is to find a co-worker and instruct him on the art of acupressure. Have him push into the knots, or trigger points, in your neck with his thumbs. Make sure he pushes all the way down until you can actually feel that muscle pop - where it releases and the tension inside the muscle goes away.

The second is to have somebody dig your neck and shoulders out. As I've already mentioned, you really only want to have someone do this for you once a week - twice at the most. You can, however, do a modified massage technique.

The difference between this modified technique and the deep muscle massage is simple - you're having the musculature of your neck and shoulders dug out, but not as deeply or intensely as when you're undergoing the normal treatment.

Your third option, especially if your headache gets really bad, where the muscles in your neck actually begin to burn, is to apply a gel pack that you can heat up in a microwave oven. These make effective hot packs and will provide quick relief (most offices have microwaves these days). A good strategy is to buy one of these gel packs (they're available in drug stores) and keep it in your desk. Whenever you need to relax stiff neck muscles, simply heat one up in a microwave. This only takes about 45 seconds; some of the better gel packs will stay warm for up to 45 minutes.

Remember, heat will flush the affected area with blood and improve circulation there, so you want to use gel packs if your headache gets really bad.

Travel Tip

It's a good idea to bring gel packs along with you when you're traveling. A lot of gas stations nowadays have micro-waves for heating up sandwiches and popcorn. They'll work great for heating these gel packs, too! Once heated, just slap it on your neck and drive your headache away.

Strategies for Improving Your Posture at Home

Okay, now you're working diligently at improving your sitting posture at work. Great! But you also have to be conscious of your sitting position at home.

Most people, by the end of the day, are dead tired. As soon as they get home, what's the first thing they do? Slump into their favorite chair.

Sure, this feels good, but when you do this you're putting more strain and stretch on your back muscles. Essentially, you're duplicating your poor posture at work. If you're working on your posture at work but forgetting about it as soon as you get home, you're undermining your efforts. Either way, when you come home and curl up into your easy chair, the result's the same - you're slumping over with your shoulders forward and head down.

People who aren't physically active tend to sit in that position the rest of the evening, causing even more strain and stress on their backs. This increases tension on their neck and shoulder muscles, causing muscle fatigue and - ultimately - a tension headache.

The more you adapt to that posture, the less likely you'll be able to straighten up and maintain a good, erect posture. The more slouched over you are, the sooner your muscles will fatigue during the day and the faster that headache will come on.

So, make sure when you go home that you sit in a good chair that puts you in an upright position.

While it's possible to sit properly in a reclining chair, you should know that most recliners force you to sit with your head in a forward position. The reason is that they come with a large pillow at the neck

area. These pillows are supposed to fit the curvature of your neck. Unfortunately, they never do; they actually push the head into a forward position, which stretches out that musculature even more.

Obviously, you don't want to do this; you want your head in line with your shoulders. So, be very careful with your favorite recliner, easy chair or couch that you relax in.

Why You Need to Improve Your Sleeping Position - and How to Do It

Let's talk about something you probably haven't given much thought to: the posture you sleep in. I've helped many patients cure themselves of tension headaches by getting them to modify their sleeping positions.

The average person sleeps between 6-8 hours a night. Now, we just talked about the hazards of sitting at a desk in a slumped-over posture all day. We know that puts a great strain on the musculature.

When you turn in for the night, you probably don't fall asleep in a sitting position. Yet when most people sleep, they adopt a posture that is almost the same as when they're sitting in a chair. Their heads are down and shoulders are forward; they kind of tuck themselves up and in.

When you sleep like this, you're stretching your back out and bringing your chest, arms and neck in. As a result, you're causing these muscles to tighten up overnight.

Granted, you're not putting that much of a strain on these muscles, as they don't have to hold up your body and support it when you're asleep. However, your body adapts to the position you assume at night. So, if you sleep all curled up, the front of your body will begin to tighten up and the back of your body will begin to stretch.

That's just the opposite of what you're trying to accomplish during the day. You want to stretch the front of your body and tighten up your back. By lying on your side and curling up, you're tightening up the front of your body.

If you lie on your stomach - which is no good for your lower back - you're head's usually twisted to one side. While that will increase the flexibility of one side, it'll tighten up the other.

If you put your arm over your head while you're sleeping on your stomach, you'll stretch the front of your body. Unfortunately, you'll also cut off circulation there because you'll be pressing on the collection of nerves of the brachial plexus and the brachial artery, which supplies blood to the lower extremities.

So, sleeping on your side may be good for your back, but it's no good for neck, upper back, shoulders and chest.

What you need to do is sleep in a position that duplicates the kind of posture that you want to have during the day: shoulders back, head straight. Your ears should be in alignment with your shoulders, which should be in alignment with your elbows, which should be in alignment with your hip, knee and down through your ankle. Obviously, the only way to maintain this positioning is on your back. Sleeping on your back represents a neutral posture; it represents a very straight posture that ensures that your body stays in alignment. If you can keep your body in alignment, it won't stretch or tighten up while you sleep.

A lot of people wake up with stiff necks, with their chests kind of tight and sore. Maybe their backs ache a little bit. The reason: They sleep all curled up, which causes their neck, back and shoulder muscles to stretch and tighten up.

Do you toss and turn all night? If you do, it's because your muscles are tightening up as you sleep. What's happening is you're cutting off blood flow to them because you sleep all curled up. As a result, they get stretched out and tight. This causes them to become fatigued and spasm. These spasms cause the muscles to squeeze down on blood vessels, which deprives them of blood. Your tossing and turning is your body's way of repositioning itself so blood flow to these spasmed muscles can be restored. This is a never-ending battle for your body if you simply roll over and curl up into a different position (which you probably do!).

If you're sleeping on your back, however, you end this cycle.

When you sleep on your back, it's important that you properly support your neck. However, by that I don't mean using a bunch of fluffy pillows. When you're sleeping on your back, using too many pillows - or pillows that are too thick - pushes your head down and forward. As you now know, this is a position you want to avoid. You want your head in the opposite position - up and back.

So use a small pillow. Sometimes a cervical pillow is good. Other times you can get away with using a small towel and kind of sticking it in the space behind the neck. Remember, all you want to do is support your neck - you don't want to push it forward.

You're probably thinking that getting used to sleeping on your back will be a difficult habit to incorporate. I won't lie to you, you're right. However, you need to give it a try because sleeping on your back goes a long way toward eliminating the cause of your tension headaches - stretched out neck and shoulder muscles and constricted chest muscles.

For a lot of people, sleeping on their backs isn't comfortable because they have such round shoulders and tight chests. So, when they lie on their backs, there's too much pressure on their upper bodies, which forces their shoulders back.

Yes, this could well be the situation for you. Sleeping on your back can be uncomfortable, even painful at first. However, as you begin to stretch out and assume a better posture, your shoulders and chest will loosen up. Before long you'll have no trouble sleeping on your back. And when you do, you'll find that you'll sleep much better and awake far more refreshed because your muscles won't be stiff.

As I've said, you need to support your neck while you sleep on your back. You're probably wondering if I recommend a particular kind of cervical pillow.

There is no particular kind that will serve everybody equally well. The reason: Everybody's physically different. Some people have big necks; others have small necks. There is no "once size fits all" cervical pillow.

Therefore, I suggest that you check out different pillows at department stores, discount stores, medical supply stores, and pharmacies. A lot of times you're not allowed to return pillows you later decide you don't like. This may well happen to you, which, of course, will cost you a few extra dollars.

However, you need to experiment with a few to find the right one that will allow you to sleep properly and wake up pain-free. Consider it an investment to your health - it is!

I've got one last word about the subject of sleeping on your back. When you do, try to keep your arms straight by your side and slightly

away from your body. This will keep your chest muscles from tightening up. If you have shoulder problems, like a bad rotator cuff, it's even more important to sleep with your shoulders straight by your side and slightly away from your body because if you don't, you'll aggravate your problem by cutting off circulation.

The Mind-Body Connection

Now you're sitting straight and working more comfortably. Your chest and shoulders are starting to loosen up. The frequency, duration and intensity of your headaches are starting to decrease. You're even sleeping better at night. We're all done now, right?

Wrong. I have one more point to make. There's a mind-body connection you should be aware of.

Medical science has been ignoring this connection for years. However, I'm sure you've heard or read about the connection between what your mind thinks and what your body does. Conversely, what your body does also causes a mental or emotional reaction. This connection shouldn't be ignored.

Patients often ask me if emotional stress can cause tension headaches. The answer is yes, definitely.

Stress tends to settle in the neck and shoulder areas. Stressed-out, depressed people have an unmistakable look: slumped-shouldered, slightly hunched over, with their heads in a forward, down position - and they're not smiling.

Sound familiar? If it doesn't, go back to the beginning of this booklet and read it again.

The mind-body connection is *very* important because you're going to look the way you feel and feel the way you look. The more you react to stressful situations, the worse you're going to look. And if you look bad because of your posture at work, even a small reaction to stress will *really* set off those tight muscles.

If you think you have a bad tension headache now from sitting all day at work, just wait until you react to stress. If your posture's bad enough, when you react to stress the tension in your muscles will hit you like a sledgehammer.

So, you must learn to relax as well as work on your posture. Mental relaxation will quiet your body. Relaxing your body will quiet your mind.

The benefits of stress management are well-documented. To go through them all or to highlight the major stress-reduction techniques are well beyond the scope of this booklet (I've provided additional resources for stress reduction in the back-end catalog).

However, here are a few stress-reduction techniques that I recommend to my patients.

Stress Reduction and Muscle Relaxation Techniques

One of the best stress reducers is exercise. Here's why:

Your body's reaction to stress sets you up for "fight or flight," which, as you may remember from your high school science class, was integral to survival in the days of cave men. If you were walking through the woods and a saber-toothed tiger jumped out at you, your immediate reaction would have been to either fight or run for your life.

The same physiological reaction occurs in your body every time you react to stress. Whether you react to traffic jams, frustration at work, or a confrontation with a co-worker, the same physiological reaction happens.

Since it's unlikely that you'll fight or run away from the situation (I hope not, anyway!), you have to deal with it. The build-up of muscle tension, the increased heart rate and raised blood pressure has to be released somehow.

Exercise uses up that built-up energy and tension, allowing you to release them constructively. If you don't exercise (or aren't an accomplished yogi), the stress will remain bottled up inside you, causing a multitude of undesirable side effects...like tense neck and shoulder muscles.

How much should you exercise? In a joint statement, the National Institute of Health and the American College of Sports Medicine recommends 30 minutes of continuous activity at moderate intensity five days a week. Moderate intensity is roughly equivalent to a brisk

walk. In other words, be comfortable when performing your exercise.

If you want to exercise more than thirty minutes a day and more than five days a day, that's okay. It might even be a little bit better for you. But the important thing is to exercise at least five days a week.

The other thing that I recommend is progressive muscle relaxation techniques and/or meditation. Both are effective in helping to relieve muscle tension.

Muscle relaxation techniques and meditation require you to spend some quiet time with yourself. All it takes is 15 minutes once a day to get some real benefits, although twice a day - first thing in the morning and right before bed - is optimal.

These days, a lot of executives are setting aside 15 minutes every afternoon to "cool out." They lock their doors and don't take any phone calls during this time so they can either meditate or practice a muscle relaxation technique. Some of them do it again right after they get home.

Yes, they're very busy people who value every minute of their hectic days. However, they realize that the rewards of setting aside this short period of time are rich. Not only are they more relaxed as a result, they're more productive, too.

There's an enormous health benefit for those who incorporate muscle relaxation techniques and/or meditation into their daily routines. Practicing progressive muscle relaxation teaches you to recognize when your muscles are beginning to tighten so that you can consciously relax them before they cause you pain.

When you reach this level of awareness, you can short-circuit an oncoming tension headache with ease.

Meditation

Meditation techniques relax the mind, which in turn relaxes the body. I've listed several references in the back-end catalog. Try a few and see which ones work best for you.

Baroque Music

Music does soothe the savage beast. Researchers have discovered that listening to classical music - especially baroque music written in the key of largo at four-quarter time - has a profound relaxing effect on the body. In fact, about 30 years ago Bulgarian researchers discovered that listening to baroque music and taped information at the same time accelerates the learning process, provided that the listener is in a relaxed state - a state that baroque music induces.

This technique was used by Soviet Bloc researchers and imported to the West. It's now being used in classrooms across the country - indeed, all over the world - to accelerate learning.

Researchers have discovered that your learning comprehension is best when you're in a relaxed state. If your muscles are tense, if your body physiology, your heart rate, blood pressure and muscle tension are elevated, you're not going to learn as well. These physiological conditions are blocks to learning.

So, by listening to classical music you can actually learn two to five times faster. There's a cause and effect relationship at work here, too; by listening to baroque music, you'll help yourself relax.

I'm sure you've had the experience of your body reacting to music. Listen to some rock or dance music and you'll start tapping your foot. You feel like dancing. Maybe if you hear that special love song a lump forms in your throat.

It's the same when you listen to baroque music, written in four-quarter time (60 beats a minute). As you listen to this music, your body will physically react to the tempo. Your heart rate will drop, or start to drop, to mimic the sixty beats a minute you're listening to. You'll notice a decrease in your blood pressure. Your muscles will begin to relax and you'll begin to calm down.

Try it. On your way home, pop in a cassette of baroque music. Or, if you take the bus or car-pool, bring along a portable cassette or CD player.

In fact, you can even try it at work. While you're at the office during your break, put on headphones hooked up to a cassette or CD player and listen to some baroque music. I think you'll find that you'll be able to concentrate better for longer periods of time, and

you'll be more relaxed as you do it.

It's better that popping pills or drinking alcohol to calm down!

A Final Word

The acupressure and deep tissue massage techniques I described earlier in this booklet will work. I've used them extensively on hundreds of patients who've come to me for relief of chronic tension headaches.

You can't permanently hurt anyone by performing acupressure or deep tissue massage, nor can you be hurt by having it performed on you. Yes, you may experience bruising. However, if you do your bruises will go away in a few days.

You'll definitely experience pain. However, the pain will be brief. Best of all, it'll be followed by the disappearance of your headache.

Before trying either acupressure or deep tissue massage, please be sure to see your doctor to make sure that your headaches are due to muscle tension. If he or she says this is the case, then give these techniques a try. You'll be glad you did!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Bacho". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "P" and "B".

Paul Bacho

P.S.

The treatment protocols that I've outlined for you in this booklet are not a quick fix. In some cases, there will be an immediate reduction in pain; sometimes the pain will go completely away. However, one acupressure treatment or deep tissue massage will not permanently eliminate your tension headaches. Like I said earlier, you'll need several to return your neck and shoulder muscles to their normal state.

In addition to these treatments, you'll have to treat the causes of your tension headaches in order to permanently get rid of them. While treating the symptoms will make the pain go away for awhile, treating the causes will eliminate the headaches and thus keep the pain away for good.

Therefore, you must keep in mind that this is an integrated treatment plan. You're going to have to make some adjustments in your lifestyle to permanently get rid of your tension headaches.

This will require a commitment on your part, a serious commitment. However, the lifestyle adjustments that I'm imploring you to make are nothing earth-shattering. All I want you to do is stand and walk in the military posture; sit up straight and not slouch over your desk or work station; sleep in a position that allows your muscles to relax instead of tightening up overnight; incorporate stretching and strengthening exercises to make it easier for you to sit, stand and function in an upright posture; and spend some quiet time with yourself to relax physically, mentally, and emotionally.

The program I've outlined for you is an alternative approach to traditional medicine. Traditional medicine treats with drugs. The long term use of drugs isn't good for you and doesn't treat the cause of your problem.

My approach is a holistic approach. It takes into consideration your lifestyle, your habits and how they affect you physically.

My approach is safe and effective; following my instructions and incorporating them into your life is definitely good for you.

Most importantly, however, my program puts the control and responsibility for your health where it belongs - in your hands.

You have the power to make yourself feel good or cause yourself great pain. When you make a conscious effort to feel good, people around you will feel good. If you cause yourself pain, people around you will also feel pain.

That's a lot of power. It's an awesome responsibility. Please take it seriously.

P.P.S.

Besides www.tensionheadaches.com, I've got another website that you can benefit from - www.healthmeisters.com. It's packed with information about how to get permanent relief from variety of physical ailments. For example, there are reports on preventing and getting relief from carpal tunnel syndrome, how to speed the healing process of a soft tissue injury, and how to tell whether you should use ice or heat after an injury. You'll also find reports on how to pick the right athletic shoe, whether you should drink water or a sports drink during (yes, during!) exercise, and how to stretch properly (most people don't).

Best of all, I'll constantly be adding new material, so it'll be a site you'll want to check out often.

Healthmeisters Publishing Company Back-end Catalog

Healthmeisters Publishing Company offers a variety of special reports designed to help you get over various physical ailments. What follows are the abstracts of our current inventory, all of which contain solid advice about what to do about these ailments. We are constantly expanding our inventory to include more reports. For a current list, visit our web site, www.healthmeisters.com.

Visiting a medical professional should be your first step before undertaking any of the protocols that follow (as well as any others you may read elsewhere). Treatment of illness or injury must be supervised by a physician or other licensed health professional. Accordingly, either you, or the professional who examines and treats you, must take full responsibility for the uses made in any of the information offered here.

Tips on Getting Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Relief

Carpal tunnel syndrome relief - you believe you need it desperately. If you do indeed have the disease, you're afflicted with a serious condition. If you allow carpal tunnel syndrome to progress - through continuing the repetitive hand motion that caused the disorder - irreparable nerve damage can occur. At this point you'll have to undergo surgery.

Yes, you must get relief from carpal tunnel syndrome - if you actually have the disease. However, maybe you don't. Just because you have wrist pain or a numb wrist doesn't mean you have carpal tunnel syndrome. Your doctor should evaluate and diagnose any wrist pain, since there are other medical conditions that can cause it. These include diabetes and hypothyroidism. It is critically important that these conditions be ruled out.

So what is carpal tunnel syndrome? It's a compression or the squeezing of the median nerve at the wrist. Assuming your doctor has treated any coexisting medical conditions, the usual cause is overuse.

What happens is the sheaths that cover the tendons in the wrist swell, trapping the median nerve. As a result, you may experience pain and/or swelling in the wrist, numbness and/or tingling in the hand, and a loss of grip strength. All of these symptoms may be present at once, in combination, or individually.

There are several things you can do to prevent carpal tunnel syndrome and improve the symptoms of this disease. The most important - indeed, essential - element in your treatment program is your motivation, as you'll need to expend considerable energy and effort. Don't rely on your doctor solely for a cure. If you do, you'll be setting yourself up for disappointment.

That said, here are some proven tips for preventing and/or resolving carpal tunnel syndrome:

- If you're an assembly line worker, data processor, or in any work environment where you perform repetitive movements at a high frequency, change your work activity periodically to lessen the repetitive movements. For example, change jobs on the assembly line every few hours, or every few days, or take a break from data entry and do some filing or phone work.

- If you're confined to a desk, practice good body mechanics and ergonomics. This is essential. For example, your wrists should be parallel to your desk or keyboard and your elbows should be at a 90 degree angle to your desk or keyboard.
- Your wrists should also be on a wrist pad.
- Wear wrist splints. They allow you to use your hands while limiting the wrist movements that cause carpal tunnel syndrome (you may need to wear wrist splints to bed if you notice your hands going numb at night).
- Alternate ice and heat massages to your wrist. These massages will help alleviate symptoms and hasten the healing process.
- Stretch your wrists by pulling them back until you feel a slight pull. Hold this stretch for three full minutes but DO NOT cause any pain while stretching. Assuming you can do this without pain, this stretch should be done three or four times a day.
- Do wrist curls, both extension and flexion, with light weights (no more than one pound to start with). These exercises will strengthen your wrists. Practice these exercises ONLY if you're not suffering any symptoms, as doing an exercise that increases your wrist pain is counterproductive.

The bottom line is that the best cure for carpal tunnel syndrome is prevention. Be aware of your positioning at work and any high-frequency repetitive motions you perform. Utilize the above tips. And, above all else, see your doctor if you have any wrist pain that continues to get worse.

You can get more information about preventing and curing yourself of carpal tunnel syndrome by ordering my special report: ***Carpal Tunnel Syndrome: How To Stop It Before It Gets Out Of Hand.*** Only \$7.97, it shows you how to tell the difference between carpal tunnel syndrome and conditions that cause similar symptoms, what causes these symptoms, and how to get rid of them so you can work free of pain. To get your copy, call 440-708-2656, visit my web site at www.healthmeisters.com, or use the convenient ordering form that comes with this booklet.

For more information, e-mail info@healthmeisters.com, or call 440-708-2656.

Should You Use Ice or Heat on an Injury?

Whether you use ice or heat on an injury depends on several factors:

- When the injury occurred
- How it happened
- How much damage was done
- How much pain was involved

A good rule of thumb, however is to apply ice to a traumatic injury (like an ankle sprain) and heat to an injury that resulted from overuse (like back soreness that you notice the day after doing yard work).

Ice should be applied for five to 12 minutes, then taken off for 15-20 minutes, then reapplied for another five to 12 minutes. This cycle should be repeated as often as possible for the first 24-48 hours after the injury.

Heat should be applied to an overuse injury for as long as you want. In fact, you should use it as long as possible, as it will relax the tissue and help it heal faster. Just don't use so much heat that it burns or hurts.

For more information about whether to use ice or heat on an injury, order my special report, *Ice or Heat*.

In it you'll discover:

- The effects of ice on an injury
- The effects of heat on an injury
- Why it's critical to apply ice to a traumatic injury as soon as possible
- How traumatic injuries can cause dangerous blood pools to form
- Why you should not leave ice on a traumatic injury for more than a few minutes at a time
- When you should switch from ice to heat on a traumatic injury - and why
- When to use a combination of ice and heat on an injury

Ice or Heat only costs \$7.97. It's available via my on-line data base at www.healthmeisters.com, or through the mail. If you want me to mail you a copy, use the convenient ordering form that comes with this booklet, or call 440-708-2656.

For more information, e-mail info@healthmeisters.com, or call 440-708-2656.

Tips on Picking the Right Running Shoe

The assumption that there is one perfect running shoe that will give all runners a competitive edge and keep them free of injury is common. It's also untrue.

Before you shell out your hard-earned money on running shoes, you should know a bit about your feet and feet mechanics. What you want to do is choose the shoe that will match and complement your feet.

There are two terms that describe the motions a foot goes through when walking and running: pronation and supination.

Pronation is the inward roll of the foot that allows the body to absorb shock and adapt to uneven surfaces. It occurs as soon as the heel touches the ground.

Supination is the slight outward roll which makes the foot more rigid and ready for push-off. It occurs as your body weight moves over your foot from the midfoot to the forefoot.

Injuries can occur when one's foot either pronates or supinates excessively. Those who are predisposed to excessive pronation strike the ground on the outside portion of their heel to the extent that their foot continues to roll in past the point where it should stop. This flattens the arch of the foot. The result - despite the fact that excessive pronators absorb shock well - is instability in the foot. An unstable foot can and will cause shin pain, knee pain and low back pain.

Those with excessive supination have the opposite problem. They often have inflexible feet with high arches. While such feet are stable, they don't absorb shock well. As a result, runners with this

problem often suffer injuries that result from jarring forces (like stress fractures).

Shoes can dramatically affect foot mechanics. Therefore, wearing the correct shoe can help prevent injuries; conversely, wearing the wrong shoe can increase the odds of incurring foot problems.

So, the next time you buy running shoes, go to a store whose staff is knowledgeable about foot mechanics and running shoes so that you get the kind of shoe that's best for your particular foot.

If you'd like to learn more about the factors involved in picking the right kind of running shoe, you should order my special report, ***How to Pick the Right Running Shoe***. Only \$7.97, it shows you:

- How off-center shoes cause foot injuries to runners
- What the three major considerations are when shopping for running shoes (the brand of shoe is not one of them!)
- What kind of shoe is best for people who excessively pronate
- What kind of shoe is best for people who excessively supinate
- The importance of knowing a running shoe's three components
- How often you should replace your running shoes
- Why you should buy your running shoes in the evening
- Why you should test your shoes in the store by running in them before purchasing

You can order my on-line version of this report through www.healthmeisters.com, or send \$7.97 for a physical copy. If you opt for the physical copy, use the convenient ordering form that comes with this booklet, or call 440-708-2656.

For more information, e-mail info@healthmeisters.com, or call 440-708-2656.

Tips on How to Heal Faster After a Soft Tissue Injury

How can you tell how long you'll hurt after a traumatic injury to soft tissue? That depends on a number of factors, which include a person's ability to heal and the degree of damage the injury's caused to the tissue. Therefore, two people with the same injury will not necessarily heal at the same rate.

It is helpful to know that soft tissue (muscles, tendons, ligaments and bursas) heals in phases.

The first phase is the inflammatory phase and can last 72 hours. It involves swelling, redness, warmth and pain. Ice should be used during this time.

The repair phase is next. This can last from 48 hours to six weeks. During this phase, the body lays down scar tissue (collagen). It is not unusual to feel pain/discomfort during this time.

The final, and most important, phase is the remodeling phase. This is when the collagen is remodeled to replicate the tissue that was damaged during the injury. This is the longest phase, lasting from three weeks to a year or more.

While these phases may seem lengthy to the person who's suffered the injury, it should be of some comfort to know that there are things that can be done to minimize healing time, yet maximize the recovery.

For example, most people know that icing a soft tissue injury right after the injury occurs will minimize the swelling and aid healing. However, did you also know that if you don't exercise an injured body part (like a sprained ankle) during the healing phase, that body part will be susceptible to reinjury?

To learn more about how to promote maximum healing of a soft tissue injury, you should order my special report, *How to Promote Maximum Healing of a Sprained Ankle and Other Soft Tissue Injuries*. In it you'll learn:

- What you should do immediately after incurring a soft tissue injury (besides icing it down)
- What causes tissue to swell after it's been injured
- How to keep this swelling to a minimum

- How the body repairs injured tissue
- Why the repair phase can be painful
- How to minimize this pain
- Why it's critical to exercise an injured body part and move it through its normal range of motion during the repair phase
- How to properly exercise an injured body part during the repair phase
- Why injured ligaments never become as good as they were before they were injured
- Why it's important to pay a medical professional to treat your injury and oversee your recovery.

How to Promote Maximum Healing of a Sprained Ankle and Other Soft Tissue Injuries is available via my on-line data base at Healthmeisters for only \$7.97.

For more information, e-mail info@healthmeisters.com, or call 440-708-2656.

Tips on Stretching Properly

Many people work out hard on a regular basis. Unfortunately, most of these otherwise fit people don't stretch, or stretch improperly. This is unfortunate, because proper stretching is a very important part of a fitness regimen.

Stretching properly leads to increased flexibility in your connective tissue. This results in a more efficient muscle.

There are other reasons a good stretching routine belongs in your workout regimen. One reason is you're less likely to be injured if you've got good flexibility. Another is that less strength will be needed to overcome internal resistance. This means you'll have better athletic performance.

Until recently, the attainment of flexibility has been limited to the demonstration of various stretching positions with limited instructions. For example, you'll see a chart with a series of stretching positions illustrated, with instructions to perform these stretches for, say, 30 seconds.

You should hold your stretch positions considerably longer than this - up to five minutes, in fact. In addition, you should make sure your muscles are sufficiently warmed up before stretching. Further, your stretch should not result in any pain whatsoever - the cliché no pain equals no gain is wrong when it comes to stretching.

For more information about including a proper stretching routine into your workout regimen, order my special report, *Proper Stretching For Maximum Fitness*. Only \$7.97, it gives you all the background and information you'll need to increase your flexibility and maintain it.

In this jam-packed report you'll learn:

- What connective tissues are enhanced through proper stretching
- The importance of the two basic properties of connective tissue - and which one you should focus on improving through stretching
- How much force you should use when stretching
- How long you should apply this force
- Why it's important to warm up your muscles before stretching
- How long you should spend warming up these muscles before stretching
- Why you should never initiate a short bouncy stretch
- Whether you should stretch before your workout, after, or both

Only \$7.97 *Proper Stretching For Maximum Fitness* is available via my on-line data base at www.healthmeisters.com.

For more information, e-mail info@healthmeisters.com, or call 440-708-2656.

Tips on Fluid Replenishment After Exercise

It's extremely important to replace fluids lost from strenuous exercise. If you don't, you can become dehydrated which can, in extreme cases, result in heat stroke (which can be fatal).

Replacing fluids lost during exercise helps lower your core temperature and maintain blood plasma volume and cardiac output. It

also improves endurance and decreases or eliminates the risk of heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

The ideal situation is to replace fluids as you lose them. However, often that's not possible. So shoot for replacing 80 percent of the fluid you lose as you work out. If you can do that, you'll definitely run/bike/swim, etc. farther and faster.

The better shape you're in, the more you'll sweat and the faster you lose fluids. The hotter it is, the more you'll sweat. The longer you exercise, the more you'll sweat. This means increasing your fluid consumption.

Should you drink water or a sports drink? The answer - a sports drink. A good sports drink will replace valuable minerals, etc. that you can't get from water alone.

If you'd like more information about proper rehydration after exercise, order my report, *Water vs. Sports Drinks*. Only \$7.97, it teaches you:

- How much fluid you go through during a hard workout
- Why a sports drink is a better way to rehydrate than water
- What sports drink is best - and why
- Why it's better to drink during your workout instead of afterward
- How much you should drink

You can order my on-line version at www.healthmeisters.com. For a physical copy, call 440-708-2656 or you can use the convenient ordering form that comes with this booklet.

For more information, e-mail www.healthmeisters.com or call 440-708-2656.

The Original Index Knobber II®

Developed as a device to be used by practicing hands-on therapists, the Original Index Knobber II™ allows you to reach trigger points and apply deep pressure within convenient reach of your hand. It's as safe and effective as giving a deep tissue massage with your own thumb or knuckle - the perfect tool for performing the acupressure/massage technique discussed in this book. Order one now for only \$11.95. Use the convenient ordering form that comes with this booklet, or call 440-708-2656.

Meditation and Stress Reduction Resources

There are many books on meditation and stress reduction. Here are a few worth looking at (all of these are designed for beginners):

- How to Meditate, by Lawrence LeShan. Bantam Books.
- How to Meditate, a Step-by-step Guide to the Art and Science of Meditation by John Novak. Crystal Clarity Publishing
- The Method of Zen, by Eugene Herrigel. Vintage Books
- Don't Just Do Something, Sit There, by Sylvia Boorstein. Harper Collins

Exercise and Stretching Resources

The Relaxation Response, by Herbert Benson, M.D. Morrow Press
Stretching, by Bob Anderson. Random House

People around the world are using
“How to Get Permanent Relief From Chronic
Tension Headaches” with great results.
Here’s a sampling of what they’re saying
about this revolutionary booklet.

I suffered from tension headaches for years. I tried everything - painkillers, doctors, massage therapists - nothing worked. Then a friend told me about tensionheadaches.com, so I went there and ordered the booklet. Thank God I did! My headaches are gone and they don't come back.

Jannette T., Chicago, IL

I've been following your booklet for almost a week now and I've been feeling great! For the first time since I've had this problem, I finally feel as though I might be getting somewhere. I find it very strange that I visited so many doctors both in Australia and the UK... and none of them seemed to be able to help me. They just kept feeding me with loads of pills and none of them ever seemed to give me much relief.

Erika P., Perth Australia

I went to doctors, therapists, tried electrical stimulation, traction, biofeedback, pain management...your treatment was the only thing that gave me relief from my headaches and neck pain.

Rick B., Aurora, OH

I wholeheartedly endorse Paul's chronic tension headache program to anyone suffering from this condition. I've seen first-hand how effective it is, as I've been referring my tension headache patients to him for many years. Simply put, his program works.

Robert Erwin, M.D./Director of Med Center One, Streetsboro, Ohio, USA

When I diagnose patients as having chronic tension headaches, I refer them to Paul because I know his program works. I would highly recommend that anyone who suffers from chronic tension headaches avail themselves to this remarkable treatment.

Jim Bressi, D.O./Director of Pain Management at Cuyahoga Falls General Hospital, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, USA

More testimonials

Thank you for being so prompt in sending out the book! I used it for the first time tonight, and I was amazed at the difference just one “massage” made! Thanks!

Julie C., Southgate MI

Paul, I would sincerely like to thank you for your tension headache program. After buying it, I immediately started the exercise and muscle stripping.

After a couple weeks, I really noticed my neck muscles loosening up. Anyway, I feel much better after about 3 months treatment. Thanks for making this information so understandable and so available.

Joe S., Wausau, WI

I have begun your program and am feeling better already. I cannot believe my constant, awful headaches have melted away. A blessing indeed! Thanks so much!

Margie W., Clarksburgh, MD

I knock on wood as I say that I have not had a tension headache for months. Very amazing, and it is no small thing to change even one person's life in such a significant way. Thank you!

Karen H., Poulsbo, WA

I can't tell you how much brighter I feel. The headaches seemed to have moved now and my neck is so much looser. Just a week ago I had been close to hopeless. Not now!

Michael M., Elk Grove, CA