

5 Signs Your Migraines May Be Coming From Your Neck

A free guide from Dr. Robert Shortell, DC — Cromwell Chiropractic Center

Many people who suffer from chronic migraines or recurring headaches have never been evaluated for a cervical spine component. Yet research consistently shows that the neck is one of the most common — and most overlooked — sources of headache pain. Below are five signs that your headaches may be originating from your cervical spine, and that chiropractic care may be able to help.

1

Your headaches almost always start in the neck or base of the skull

If you notice your headaches beginning with stiffness, soreness, or tension at the back of the neck or base of the skull before the pain moves upward or forward, this is a classic pattern of cervicogenic headache — headaches that originate from the cervical spine. This is different from headaches that start with visual disturbances or pressure in the sinuses.

2

Turning your head or looking up makes your headache worse

The seven bones of your neck are in constant motion. When one or more of them has lost proper alignment or movement, certain neck positions can aggravate the irritated nerves and intensify a headache already in progress. If rotating your head, looking upward, or holding a position for a prolonged time reliably worsens your symptoms, the spine is likely involved.

3

Your headaches are accompanied by tight shoulders or upper back pain

The muscles of the upper back, shoulders, and neck are intimately connected to the cervical spine. When spinal joints lose normal motion, the surrounding muscles often tighten and guard in response. Many patients with spinal-related headaches also carry chronic tension in the trapezius, levator scapulae, and suboccipital muscles — the band of muscles running from the shoulders to the base of the skull.

4

You find temporary relief when you lie down or change position

Postural relief is a meaningful clue. Gravity places significant load on the cervical spine when you are sitting or standing. When you lie down, that load is reduced, and for many people with spinal-related headaches, this brings noticeable — if temporary — relief. Migraines caused by other mechanisms do not typically respond this way to positional change.

5

Medications reduce the pain but the headaches keep coming back

This is one of the most common patterns we see. Medications manage the symptom but do not address the underlying mechanical problem in the spine. If the joints of the neck remain restricted or misaligned, the irritation on the surrounding nerves continues, and headaches return — often more frequently over time. Chiropractic care aims to restore proper movement and alignment to the spine, addressing the source rather than just the symptom.

***A note from Dr. Shortell:** Not every headache has a spinal cause, and chiropractic care is not appropriate for every patient. The purpose of this guide is simply to help you recognize a pattern that is often missed. If several of the signs above resonate with you, an evaluation can determine whether spinal involvement is contributing to your symptoms — and whether care is likely to help. There is no obligation when you call.*

Ready to find out if your neck is the cause?

Call or text our office to schedule a new patient evaluation, or to ask questions before committing to anything. Dr. Shortell offers a free 10-minute phone consultation for patients who want to discuss their symptoms first. **Call: (860) 635-4455 | Text: (860) 999-2435** 28 Shunpike Rd, Cromwell, CT |
Appointments: Monday, Wednesday & Friday