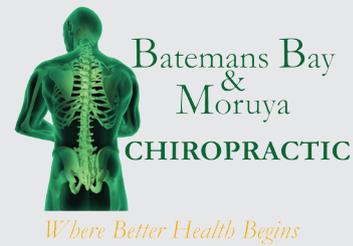


MIGRAINES



MIGRAINES

Although migraine attacks affect a significant number of people, the triggering processes for the headaches are not fully understood.

Changes in the function of the blood or nervous systems in specific areas of the brain and changes in chemical balances within the body have been related to the cause of migraine attacks. So, it is interesting that chiropractic treatment has been shown to be effective for migraine sufferers.

Migraines are normally divided up into two different types although many more subdivisions exist. These two main categories are 'common' and 'classic' migraine.

The pain of the headache is normally one sided covering half of the forehead and one eye, however, pain can also spread from the back of the head over to the eye or in some cases be located over both eyes. Sensations described include, throbbing, pulsing and stabbing pains.

Common Migraine

This is the most common type of migraine accounting for 80-85% of attacks. Research indicates that a change in cerebral blood flow could be responsible for the symptoms of this headache.

It is normally characterised by :

- A unilateral pulsing headache ;
- More commonly in females;
- Usually found to have started in young adulthood;
- Headaches are usually severe although sufferers are able to carry on with their daily activities;
- There is often associated nausea and vomiting.

Classic Migraine

This type of migraine accounts for about 10-15% of attacks with the typical throbbing unilateral headache as in a common migraine, but is preceded by what is known as 'aura' or 'prodrome'. This describes symptoms experienced prior to the onset of the throbbing headache such as:

- Visual symptoms such as flashing lights (scintillation);
- The presence of a blind spot (scotoma).

This usually lasts up to 30 minutes after which it is replaced by a disabling headache that can last for a few hours to 3 days.

- Nausea and vomiting may occur.
- Photophobia (sensitivity to bright lights) is common and bright lights can also provoke the pain.
- Rest in a cool dark and quiet room is often reported to be the only relieving factor.

Again, the cause of these headaches are not fully understood but are thought to be related to the changes in blood flow, the presence of certain chemicals and the way in which nerves send signals.

Triggers

Many triggers have been related to the onset of a migraine attack some of the more common are listed below:

- After periods of stress (commonly occurs on over the week end or holidays);
- Foods (commonly; chocolate, caffeine, nitrates, cheese, nuts, wine and many more);
- Some medications (including vasodilators);
- Changes in sleeping habits;
- Hormonal changes (associations with the menstrual cycle);
- Tension in the neck (especially the upper part of the neck).

But it is important to know that in reality, for many people, the symptoms are a mixture of more than one type of headache. Many specialists, including Chiropractors, now talk about a headache continuum, where the severely disabling, classical migraine is at one end ranging to the less disabling, mild tension headache at the other end.

Treating Migraine

Identification of a specific trigger is essential in the management of the problem in a regular sufferer, with behavioural or lifestyle changes playing an important part in the treatment (e.g. avoidance of certain foods or maintenance of a regular sleep pattern).

Nutritional and herbal support have indicated that the use of supplements such as omega-3 fatty acids, magnesium, calcium, vitamin D among others useful in the treatment of migraine. However, always consult your Chiropractor or Doctor before beginning any supplements.

Medications can be of use in some cases but are mainly prophylactic. Initially over the counter medications can be used but if persistent your GP may advise the use of prescription drugs.

Acupuncture treatment has also been shown to help in some cases among other alternative techniques.

Chiropractic has been shown to help reduce the severity and frequency of migraine attacks in many cases, especially cases of common migraines, and we therefore recommend that you undergo a trial treatment.

Chiropractic treatment also deals with many contributory factors or after effects including relieve of restriction in movement of the neck, muscle tension in the neck, upper back and shoulders and helping correct any postural issues that may influence the occurrence of both migraine and tension headaches.

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