



# Staying in Touch®

## Greetings—

As we head into autumn and what many consider to be the busiest season of the year, it's more important than ever to avoid stressful situations that can lead to illness. Who can afford to take time off?

One of the most common, debilitating health problems is a headache. Before you resort to taking a couple of aspirin, realize there is something causing that headache. If you can eliminate or control the cause, you can be in better control of your health and avoid taking pain medications needlessly.

When you're in pain, relief seems to be the most important immediate goal. Just remember that a side effect of drug use is placing stress on organs in your body and leaving toxic residues in your cells.

One of the great benefits of massage is that it can help you maintain a better state of health naturally. It's always a good thing when you can reduce the levels of residual toxins in your body rather than adding new ones—and massage can help to do that.

Make your regular massages a high priority and help your body stay as healthy and happy as possible. See you at your next appointment.

## When a Pain in the Neck Becomes a Pain in the Head

Nobody likes being in pain, especially from headaches. The American Council for Headache Education reports that, during the past year, nearly 90 percent of men and 95 percent of women have had at least one headache. Here is an article by Kelly James-Enger, a free-lance journalist specializing in health, fitness and nutrition topics, covering some useful information on headaches.

"It turns out your mom was right when she told you not to slouch... [T]here's a connection between poor posture and headache frequency.

'If someone has chronic headache pain, [we find] he or she often sits in a slouched, head-forward position,' explains Dr. Merle Diamond, associate director of the Diamond Headache Clinic in Chicago. 'That aggravates the muscles of the head and neck and can lead to more muscle spasms and more pain.' Doctors call these *cervicogenic headaches*, and they can cause something called 'referred pain.' While the problem may originate in your neck, it's the back of your head that aches.

"There are definite associations between neck or cervical spine triggers and both migraine and tension-type headaches, says Dr. Robert Kaniecki, an assistant professor of neurology at the University of Pittsburgh and director of the Headache Center there. Tension-type headaches are often due to muscle irritation in the neck; the resulting headache is often felt around the area where the muscles insert at the base of the skull, says Kaniecki. 'The head is essentially a 10-pound structure,' he says. 'If it's not balanced on the top of your neck and shoulders, it can certainly aggravate the cervical spine and trigger

muscle tension, and muscle tightness. This can lead to spasms or the development of headaches.'

"However, doctors now believe that there's also a connection between neck pain and migraines. 'Recently we learned that

migraine, as opposed to arising from blood vessel or vascular problems, appears to arise from neurological origins,' says Kaniecki. 'And the structure that processes pain in the head that's inside the brain—the relay center for pain—also relays pain signals from the upper neck.'

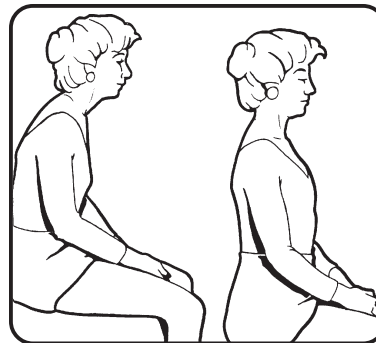
That's why doctors believe that irritation in the neck and upper shoulder area—the cervical region—can trigger migraines too.

### Sit up straight, feel better

"If you already have neck problems, you may be one of the unlucky people predisposed to these headaches. One study found that people with joint or muscular abnormalities in their heads and necks were more likely to suffer from both tension and migraine headaches. However, if you tend to get headaches at the end of the day, poor posture may be the culprit.

"Improving your posture and strengthening your neck and shoulder muscles can make a big difference—in clinical trials, people who did posture and strengthening exercises reduced their headache frequency. 'One of the things we tell our patients with chronic daily headaches is to work on their posture,' says Diamond. 'They should do a check-in and make sure that they're sitting upright because it's clear that a lot of these people slouch a lot.'

(See **Pain in the Neck ...** on back page)



## Leaf Behind the Suffering

(by Karen Springen in *Newsweek*)

"A football injury makes a better story, but raking leaves could be the sport that sidelines you this fall. To avoid injuries, follow these tips from the National Athletic Trainers' Association. Dress in layers that you can shed as you work up a sweat, with gloves to prevent blisters... If your back has been injured before, wear a simple brace (available for about \$20; ask the pharmacist for fitting details). Stretch your shoulders before you hit the yard, drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration and start slow. Rake strokes that are short and steady are the best, so that you don't overextend yourself and pull a muscle. Don't overstuff trash bags, either. Move the bags around in a wheelbarrow—and if you get tired, recruit the kids to lend a hand. But make sure you bend your knees and lift with your legs, not your back, while you load the bags in. Because 'repetitive activity creates soreness,' says Marjorie Albohm, a certified athletic trainer, cap off your raking with a warm bath or shower. It'll help reduce sore muscles..."

Then schedule your next massage!

## Pain in the Neck ...

(Continued from front page)

"At the Headache Center at the University of Pittsburgh, patients learn natural means of improving headache, including regulating their sleep and meal patterns and performing a daily 30-minute walk. Kanieki suggests that headache sufferers keep the phrase, 'walk tall, sit straight, stretch out' in mind. During your daily walk, focus on maintaining good posture—imagine that there's a string at the top of your head and keep your head balanced over your shoulders, back straight, as you stroll.



"At work, make sure that you're sitting straight, not hunched over, and take regular breaks away from your computer. Finally, implement a regular stretching routine into your day. Even a simple series of neck stretches (tilting your head to the left, then right, forward and back, for example) helps. You'll reduce your chances of leaving work with stiff shoulders and an achy, pounding head—and your mom will compliment you on your new and improved posture as well."

Remember that massage has been shown effective in relaxing tense muscles that may be contributing to posture problems and headaches!

*Front-page graphic from the MediClip Manual Medicine Collection, Williams & Wilkins, A Waverly Company*

**Help someone soothe  
the tension with a gift  
certificate for massage!**



**"An unfortunate thing about this world is that  
the good habits are much easier to give up  
than the bad ones."**

**—W. Somerset Maugham**

*The content of this newsletter is not intended to replace professional medical advice. If you're ill, please consult a physician.*