

NEUROMUSCULAR THERAPY CENTER, INC. PHYSICIAN NEWSLETTER

Innovative Physical, Occupational, & Massage Therapies for Pain Relief and Injury Rehabilitation



Headaches and Massage Therapy - ¹While there is a fairly substantial body of evidence supporting the use of massage therapy with ²tension, cluster, and ³cervicogenic headaches, ⁴there has not been a great deal of independent research to ascertain the value of massage in treating migraine headaches. ³Many people who get migraines seek out nondrug therapies because the medications typically used to treat migraine headaches often have side effects that complicate treatment. People with stomach inflammation (gastritis), peptic ulcers, cardiovascular disease, pregnant (or hoping to be), and nursing women, are often unable to use these medications; as are some who have a history of long-term, frequent, or excessive use of analgesic or abortive medication. ³Others simply prefer to avoid or delay medication use, as part of a more conservative plan of care. ^{3,5,6}Published studies on the use of massage for migraine headaches all showed a decrease in headache occurrence and improved sleep quality. These studies also showed trends for beneficial effects on perceived state anxiety including coping efficacy, decreased heart rates, lower salivary cortisol, and increased serotonin levels. ³It should be noted that massage therapy interventions are aimed at the prevention of headache episodes rather than the alleviation of symptoms once an attack has begun, but there may also be a correlation linking massage with the effectiveness of medication. ⁵In the Hernandez study, massage was combined with medication, and 60% of the trial group went an entire month headache free compared to 40% of the control group that received only medication. ²The Mayo foundation also reported, “The right combination of medicines combined with self-help remedies (several nontraditional therapies including massage were also mentioned) and changes in lifestyle may make a tremendous difference.” In addition to the use of conventional massage techniques referenced above, our staff practitioners are often able to bring about relief from headache symptoms with cranial sacral techniques. The long term benefit for headache patients is that our Medicare and managed care insurance contracts allow us to treat headache with physical and occupational therapies, as well as various forms of therapeutic massage.

¹National Library of Medicine at the National Institutes of Health - NCBI - PMID 12356617,

²Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, (June 2005),

³Duke University Evidence-based Practice Center, Center for Clinical Health Policy research (2005),

⁴Health Information Center at the Cleveland Clinic, website accessed Jan 2007

⁵Hernandez-Reif, M., Field, T., Dieter, J., & Diego, M., (1998) *International Journal of Neuroscience*, 96,1-11,

⁶Lawler, S.P., Cameron, L.D., (2006) *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 32, (1), 50-59

Please consider asking your doctor for a referral to our practice if you are bothered by pain, suffer from an injury, or are planning a surgery. You can print a referral form (Rx form) from the home page of this website.