



take a patient's full history to determine an action plan, which may include treatment or referral. First, "we rule out red flags such as the sudden onset of headaches, pain that is aggravated when the body is in certain positions, focal neurological signs, sensory changes focused in one spot, memory loss, confusion or blank spells, and headaches that get progressively worse," explained McClelland.

"From a chiropractic standpoint we need to find out if there is something going on in the neck," he said. Is there reduced joint movement or a decreased range of motion?

A headache indicates the body is not functioning properly. "My job is to remove the interference to healthy

**A 2001 study from Durham, NC-based Duke University Evidence-Based Practice Center, determined that spinal manipulation produced almost immediate improvement for headaches that originated in the neck.**

function in the body, which I do by correcting spinal misalignments – vertebral subluxations (which means when one or more of the bones of the spine move out of position causing pressure or irritation)," said D'Angelo.

Research has proven the effectiveness of chiropractic medicine to relieve the health challenges that cause headaches.

"There are seven cervical vertebrae, if they are not moving well, the restriction can create headaches. Chiropractors deliver a cervical adjustment that relaxes the muscles and provides relief," Ruddy noted.

"Researchers at Northwestern College of Chiropractic in Minnesota did a study on tension and migraine headaches comparing chiropractic care to certain drug therapies.

The study, published in the Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics, followed 218 headache sufferers who were given either chiropractic care or drug therapy or both," cited D'Angelo. "All groups reported pain reduction of 40-50%. However, after all care was stopped, only the chiropractic group still retained the benefits, while the others lost about half of their improvement."

**CAN CHIROPRACTIC CARE WORK FOR ALL HEADACHES?**

Cervicogenic headaches – which based on research from the International Headache Society account for 1.5 million of the headaches people experience – have been extremely responsive to chiropractic care. There has also been evidence that chiropractic care may help in a much wider range of cases than was originally thought due to the overlapping definitions of headache symptoms, and the core causes of the headaches.

"In eight years of practice, I can say

without hesitation that 100% of the chronic headache sufferers who have benefited from chiropractic care at my office have come here as a last result after undergoing sometimes years of state-of-the-art medical interventions

and drug therapies," commented D'Angelo.

**HOW LONG DOES TREATMENT TAKE – AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

Of course, results vary, but in many cases "results can be abortive," says McClelland, "but usually are not immediate – sometimes within 24 hours. It takes time for the physiology to respond. Preventive treatment is best for frequent sufferers," he suggested.

In addition to treating the headache, chiropractors help patients identify the behavioral and environmental causes that may contribute to a recurrence. "We look at their daily living activities," Ruddy adds. The number of visits needed to alleviate the malady is indeterminate, "but as long as the patient continues to improve treatment should continue," Ruddy adds.

**Headache Advice from the American Chiropractic Association**

- *Avoid spending extended periods in fixed positions such as in front of a computer, on a sewing machine, typing or reading. Take a break every 30-60 minutes.*
- *Try low-impact exercise – walking or low-impact aerobics to avoid migraines.*
- *Avoid the following:*
- *Clenching your teeth which produces stress at the temporomandibular joints (TMJ) – leading to a form of tension headaches.*
- *Dehydration by drinking at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water each day.*
- *Caffeine, soda, cocoa, alcohol, red meat, and dairy products*