

PainNews

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Why Does Chronic Pain

CAUSE FATIGUE?

HOW TO | Avoid Cluster Headaches
During the Holidays

The Relationship Between
Neck Pain & Headaches



The Pain Center
OF ARIZONA



Why Does Chronic Pain

CAUSE FATIGUE?

Chronic pain is a complex condition that may puzzle those who don't experience it on a daily basis. On the outside, people with chronic pain may not show physical signs of the condition. On the inside, however, they're usually experiencing pain and a number of other symptoms. In fact, chronic pain patients are typically affected by anxiety, depression, a weakened immune system, stiffness, and fatigue as well. Depression and anxiety could be due to the emotional toll pain causes, but how does fatigue come into play?

Fatigue may not be caused by chronic pain directly. Instead, it could be the result of symptoms or conditions related to chronic pain, such as stress or depression.

Depression and chronic pain have a unique relationship. Studies have suggested that people with depression tend to feel increased pain compared to those who do not experience depression. Our physicians may recommend alternative therapies such as acupuncture to reduce stress and promote

relaxation. Or, they may suggest behavioral health techniques to bring balance to interventional pain care.

Fatigue may not be the result of stress and depression; it may be a pain medication side effect. **Antidepressant and anti-convulsion medications are commonly prescribed at The Pain Center of Arizona because they are effective in treating pain, but they may have an impact on your energy level as well. Talk to your physician if you feel your pain medication is causing fatigue.** He or she may suggest taking a lower dosage of your current medication or recommend a new medication altogether.

If depression, stress, and medication are not causing your fatigue, your pain specialist may want to explore the possibility of fibromyalgia. Fibromyalgia is a condition that causes severe fatigue, widespread musculoskeletal pain, reduced concentration, and occasionally, headaches or stomach problems. Our physicians can administer a physical examination to diagnose fibromyalgia.

Fatigue has its hand in just about every aspect of chronic pain. Talk to your doctor about the source of your overwhelming fatigue so you can make adjustments to overcome it. If you suffer from chronic pain due to any condition or injury, find hope at The Pain Center of Arizona! Our dedicated team of board certified pain management physicians will work with you to treat your pain, increase your functionality and quality of life, and get you back into life!

The Relationship Between *Neck Pain & Headaches*

The head and neck have a very interchangeable relationship in regard to pain. The cause of your headaches could come from your neck and your neck pain could be stemming from your head. Sometimes, the head and neck may even hurt at the same time. The first step in treating pain is to identify where it is really coming from, so understanding the relationship between the head and the neck is vital to beginning the path to recovery.

There are a number of possibilities that The Pain Center of Arizona physicians will look at. One possible connection could be the occipital nerve. This nerve is found around the base of the neck and reaches all the way to the top of the head. When this nerve is damaged, people may develop a condition called occipital neuralgia. Symptoms include severe headaches on one or both sides of the head and neck pain. If patients are experiencing neck pain and headaches, there could be a problem with the occipital nerve, and recommended treatment may be an occipital nerve block, or an injection in the back of the head to treat this pain.

Referred pain is another link between neck pain and headaches and is the reason that finding the true source of pain is so important. Referred pain happens when we feel pain in one part of our bodies, but the source of the pain is coming from somewhere else. For example, people who suffer from migraines may start out feeling neck pain even though their pain is originating in the head. It works the other way around too. Pain could be coming from the neck and be felt as a headache. This

strange occurrence is called a cervicogenic headache. Referred pain generally occurs because signals from the nerves can travel to other parts of the body. When it comes to the neck and head, pain signals often travel using the spinal cord. If patients only focus on treatments that address the head for headaches and don't see results, it could be because they have a problem in their neck that's been left untreated.

Sometimes, treating head and neck pain doesn't require one or the other to be treated. Some causes of head and neck pain can be treated at the same time. Patients who feel pain in both areas could find relief by simply changing their habits. For example, patients could get into the habit of improving their posture. Poor posture can put pressure on the spine and spinal discs causing irritation. Being hunched over also strains the neck muscles to the point of overuse. Try improving your posture to see if headaches and neck pain are eased after some time!

The head and the neck have a symbiotic relationship; they are always interacting with each other. Next time you experience pain in either region, try taking care of both for the best results. If you suspect problems with the nerve or spine, please don't hesitate to talk to your physician at The Pain Center of Arizona!

Learn more at
www.thepaincenter.com

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HOW TO | Avoid Cluster Headaches During the Holidays

Cluster headaches are some of the most severe headaches a person can experience. It's a chronic condition that causes near-nightly attacks of pain that typically occur on one side of the head and are so severe that people wake from the pain. This sharp pain goes into remission for months and can return again for weeks, which is why they are known as cluster headaches: a patient experiences them for a period of time in a "cluster" and then won't have another for a long time. It's difficult to tell when the next cluster will happen, but the last place people want to have a cluster headache is while they are trying to enjoy the holidays.

There are a number of medications that can help reduce the frequency of a cluster headache attack. Triptans are a class of medications frequently used to treat both migraines and cluster headaches, and may be a medication that is prescribed at The Pain Center of Arizona. There are also a number of injectable options to treat cluster headaches. The injection form of treatment is believed to be more powerful and fast acting compared to traditional medication, but it is not suitable for all patients, particularly those with heart conditions.

Many patients have found relief through oxygenation as well. This option involves inhaling pure oxygen from either an inhaler or oxygen tank for several minutes when a cluster headache occurs. Oxygenation is extremely safe, can give patients relief very quickly, and may only need to be done when a headache comes on. However, patients have found that medications or injections are preferable because these options don't require patients to carry an oxygen cylinder in preparation of a cluster headache attack.

If patients are in a remission period during the holidays, there are ways to prevent a cluster from happening. Having a nerve block or steroid injection helps patients find relief for longer periods of time, so our physicians generally will recommend these treatments, but there are things you can do at home, too. Research has suggested that taking melatonin each night may decrease the likelihood of a cluster headache. If a cluster headache wakes you up at night or prevents you from falling asleep, it may be difficult to stick to a normal sleeping routine, but melatonin should also help maintain a normal sleep/wake cycle, which is critical in preventing these excruciating headaches.



While there is currently no cure for cluster headaches, The Pain Center of Arizona team wants patients to be in control of their headaches if possible.