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## **Eye Strain and the Common Headache**

Have you ever wondered about the relationship between headaches and eyestrain? How does eye fatigue make our necks tight and heads painful? One of the nucleuses of nerves that transmit information from our eyes extends from between the temples to the middle of the neck. It does not have the usual round-shape of other nuclei, but is thin and 9 inches long! This special sensory eye-nerve nucleus is located near neck nerves that control neck muscles. The eye-nerve, which is surrounded by the neck nerves, when over stimulated, irritates the neck nerves and triggers a unique reaction which makes our neck muscles tight. This contraction diminishes blood supply and causes irritation at the base of the skull, often resulting in head pain (cephalgia). Chiropractic neurological spinal decompression therapy, massage therapy and stretching relax the neck muscles that restrict normal function to the back of the head. This combined with neck manipulations frequently relieve common headaches. Some studies have shown that up to *eighty percent of common headaches originate in or have some involvement with the neck.*

Also, an effective and safe remedy can be found in applying cold gel packs to the forehead and back of neck in three repetitions- one minute on and one minute off. Too often we abuse our eyes with poor light. The amount of light on the reading surface should be the same as that which is in the room! This means that the room lights should be turned on, not off, when we watch TV, read or work on the computer. Reading can be just as irritating if the material is too close or too far away. The center of the computer monitor should be at eye-level as one peers horizontally not with the head facing downward, as is often the case. The late Dr. Joseph Janse, a leader in chiropractic research, founder of the Council on Chiropractic Education and past president of my alma mater, was instrumental in correlating eyestrain to headache.

Too often drugs had been used for the temporary relief of head pain, even though the underlying cause remained in the neck. Drugs reduce the pain by masking the symptoms of headaches less obvious. Recently, the scientific community has recognized the effectiveness of spinal decompression and manipulation as a pain relieving therapy. Chiropractic's hands-on therapy has provided headache relief for over one hundred years. (Chiropractic neurology, since it's inception in 1992, and because it specializes in the functions of the brain, has more often focused on headache)

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