

# OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Steven L. Smith, DC

## The Chiropractic Solution for Migraines

*If you have ever experienced a migraine, you know it's more than just a headache. The intense pain and accompanying symptoms can make it impossible to participate in daily activities. What's worse, migraine sufferers don't know when their next migraine will strike.*

*Mainstream medical treatment for migraines involves taking painkillers with potentially hazardous side effects and hoping for the best, because many of these medications are frequently not effective. Fortunately, individuals with migraines do have other options. Dr. Smith offers a new, all-natural way to find relief.*



### What is a Migraine?

Dr. Smith explains to patients that several characteristics make migraines different from other types of headaches. Migraines typically affect the front of one side of the head. Pain is throbbing and intense — and can last as long as 72 hours.

Migraine sufferers often experience nausea and vomiting. They may also have heightened sensitivity to light and sound. Before a migraine begins, some people experience an “aura” — an abnormality in perception such as seeing bright blobs of light, auditory hallucinations or strange smells. Scientists are not sure why, but women are more likely than men to endure migraines (*J Man Manip Ther* 2008;16:73-80).

The exact cause of migraine headaches is unknown. Unlike other head-

ache disorders, it is generally classified as a neurological condition. Research suggests that unusual activity of the blood vessels in the brain play a role (*Curr Opin Neurol* 2010;23:266-74).

Others suggest that migraines are actually symptoms of larger disorders and, over time, the brain develops maladaptive reactions to migraines, leading to chronic pain. Another theory states that a wave of heightened neurological activity followed by a wave of depressed activity causes migraines.

Some people find that their migraine attacks are triggered by specific food ingredients, such as caffeine, nitrates (used as a preservative in many processed meats) or monosodium glutamate (MSG).

### Treatment Difficulties

A range of drugs are often used to treat migraines, including pain killers, antidepressants, steroids and more. Unfortunately, migraines frequently do not respond to medication, and these drugs carry many risks of dangerous side effects.

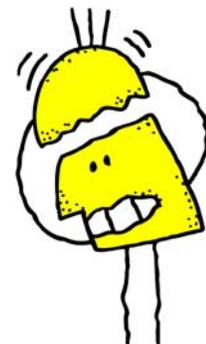
Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) — such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen and stronger prescription



painkillers — are often the first line of defense against migraines. NSAIDs are associated with gastrointestinal bleeding, frequent drug interactions, asthma and a host of other side effects. Triptans, a more powerful class of drugs used to treat migraines, actually increase sensitivity to migraine “triggers”, making migraines occur more frequently (*Ann Neurol* 2010;67:325-37).

### Chiropractic for Migraines

Chiropractors, like Dr. Smith, are experts at correcting dysfunctional areas in the spine called *vertebral subluxations*. Dr. Smith removes vertebral subluxations with gentle and effective maneuvers called *chiropractic adjustments*. Like many other maladies, migraines are related to the nervous system.



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Researchers in one trial compared migraine sufferers to a control group and found that those with migraines had higher levels of musculoskeletal dysfunction in their necks as shown by tests of range of motion (*Headache* 1993;33:566-9).

Another study showed high incidences of pain, atypical curvature and joint dysfunction in the cervical vertebrae (spinal bones of the neck) (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 1992;15:418-29).

The core of the nervous system is the spinal cord. If the vertebrae (spinal bones) that surround the spinal cord are out of alignment, migraine headaches are one of many painful ways vertebral subluxations can manifest.

### A Dramatic Difference

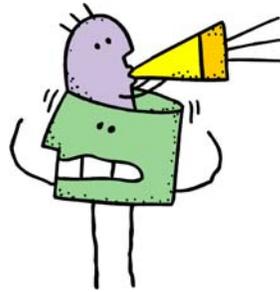
Clinical trials of chiropractic care for individuals with migraines have shown stunning results. In one study enrolling 127 migraine sufferers, participants received chiropractic adjustments for two months, each getting a minimum of 16 sessions. The patients kept diaries of their migraine headaches during the two months of care as well as for two more months afterward.

Compared to a control group, the patients receiving chiropractic adjustments showed significant reduction in migraine frequency, duration, disability and use of medicine. Half the individuals reported considerably less pain intensity, while 22 percent had an astounding 90 percent fewer migraine attacks following chiropractic care (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2000;23:91-5).



Other studies also show similar improvements following chiropractic care, including reduced nausea and hypersensitivity to light and sound

(*Australas Chiropr Osteopathy* 1997;6:85-91).



### Better Than Medication

Studies reveal that chiropractic adjustments offer the relief migraine sufferers often seek from medication, but without the risky side effects. In one such trial, migraine patients were assigned to three groups, each receiving different therapy for eight weeks: amitriptyline (an antidepressant commonly prescribed for migraines), chiropractic adjustments or a combination of the two.

All groups maintained daily headache diaries for the duration of therapy plus four additional weeks.

Four weeks after the treatment period ended, the patients who received just adjustments reported a 42 percent reduction of pain compared to 24 percent and 25 percent for medication and combination therapy, respectively. Researchers also noted that the chiropractic group experienced minimal side effects (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 1998;21:511-9).

Another study conducted six years later similarly concluded that chiropractic adjustments are at least as effective as medication and carry fewer risks (*Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2004;CD001878).

### Other Drug-Free Remedies

Along with regular chiropractic adjustments, the doctor often suggests complementing other holistic therapies to get maximum relief from migraines.

Biofeedback is a mind-body technique in which instruments measure physiologic functions, such as brainwaves, muscle tension, heart rate and respira-

tion. Patients see the body's responses to stress measured in real time and use that awareness to gain control over the body's responses. A recent review of studies shows that biofeedback is more effective than medication for migraines (*Cleve Clin J Med* 2010;77:S72-6).

Another review of trials shows the efficacy of acupuncture against both acute and chronic migraine attacks (*Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2009;CD001218).

Finally, consider vitamin and herbal supplements. Riboflavin, coenzyme Q10 and alpha lipoic acid show promise in reducing migraine frequency, as do the herbs butterbur and feverfew (*Neurol Sci* 2010;31:S137-9).

*As with any supplementation routine, talk with the doctor first about proper dosage and possible adverse interactions.*

### Don't Suffer Needlessly

Migraine headaches are debilitating. They wreak havoc on a patient's quality of life, and affect the quality of family members' lives as well. If you suffer from migraines don't continue to suffer needlessly or risk the potential hazards of migraine medication. Call our office today to schedule a consultation with the doctor.



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