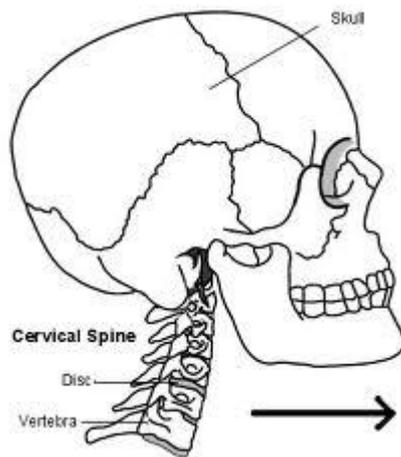# Cervicogenic Headaches

What is a cervicogenic headache?

A cervicogenic headache is a headache that comes from a problem with the neck. There is no specific structure that is the cause of the problem and the pain can come from the joints, muscles or nerves. The pain is referred from one of these structures in the top of the neck and can spread from the back of the head to the forehead and even to the area around the eyes. Women are 4 times more likely to suffer from a cervicogenic headache than men.

What are the symptoms?

Cervicogenic headaches are usually on one side of the head but can occur on both sides. The pain tends to be dull, not throbbing and can become moderate to severe in intensity. The pain is usually caused by awkward or sustained neck positions and can usually be reproduced by applying pressure to the back of the head or neck.

What is the treatment for cervicogenic headaches?

Try to maintain a **good posture**. When **sitting**, sit well back in the chair and place a rolled towel in the small of your back. Make sure your shoulders are in line with your hips and your chin is not poking forward. Sitting correctly reduces the strain on muscles and ligaments.

When **standing** make sure you stand straight with your shoulders back and your chin tucked in.

When **sleeping** avoid sleeping on your front as this strains your neck. Change the number, firmness and position of pillows for comfort. Often people with neck pain find using 1 pillow that can be pulled into the neck for support works best or adding a rolled towel into the pillow case so it is placed under your neck.

Do not sit in one position for long periods. You need to get up and move about.

The use of **ice or heat** may also help. Apply a bag of frozen peas/cold gel pack or wheat bag/hot water bottle wrapped in a towel directly to the affected area for 20 minutes. A warm shower or bath may also be beneficial.

Regularly **exercise** the neck to keep the joints mobile and the muscles flexible (sheet attached).