

Peaking Interests

Apex Physical Therapy's
patient newsletter

Fall 2008 Volume four Issue one

"Oh, my aching head"

Identification and treatment of cervicogenic headaches

By John Vercher, MPT

"It feels like my head's in a vice."
"...like someone's stuck hot poker
behind my eyes." "...like if I move my
head from side-to-side, the whole
world's crumbling around me."

As if that's not bad enough, when
a headache strikes, it can cause the suf-
ferer to experience not just the severe
pain of the headache itself, but feelings
of helplessness, hopelessness and inef-
fectiveness as well.

According to the National Headache
Foundation, an estimated 45 million
Americans suffer from chronic, recur-
ring headaches. That's approximately
one out of every six people!

In fact, according to a survey of
American workers by the same founda-
tion, employees said their headaches
were the primary cause of decreased
productivity, missed days of work,
changes in mood or behavior, and an
inability to concentrate. It's estimated
that this costs employers \$13 billion
each year and a staggering 113 million
missed days of work.

What is equally surprising is that
the source of these headaches can often
be from something you may not expect.

Most of us are familiar with migraine
or sinus headaches, but many are
unaware that up to 20 percent of
chronic headache sufferers are affected
by something called cervicogenic
headaches. This is essentially a fancy
way of referring to a headache that is
caused by dysfunction in the bony
structures or soft tissues of the neck.

The joints connecting the top two
or three levels of the cervical spine to
the base of the skull handle almost 50
percent of the total motion of the
entire neck and head region, thus
absorbing a continuous amount of
repetitive stress and strain, in addition
to bearing the primary load of the
weight of the head.

Muscular trigger points - of
which there are a great number in
the neck and shoulder region - are
very irritable areas of tightened mus-
cles that send pain to predictable
sites - in this case, to the head. Even
headaches located predominantly in
the forehead or around the eyes can
often be traced to trigger points in
the back of the neck or at the base of
the skull. Headaches of this nature
can be quite intense and can, in fact,
be mistaken for migraines due to the
similarity of their symptoms.

See **CERVICAL** page 2



Now serving Five locations

Royersford
341 10th Avenue
Suite 101
Royersford, PA 19468
610-792-8100

Blue Bell
676 DeKalb Pike
Suites 105-106
Blue Bell, PA 19422
610-270-0300

Chalfont
1500 Horizon Drive
Suite 102E
Chalfont, PA 18914
215-712-0300

Pottstown-Coventry
10 Glocker Way
Pottstown, PA 19465
610-323-4300

Lafayette Hill
466 Germantown Pike
Suite 200
Lafayette Hill, PA 19444
610-832-7510

Hours of operation

Mon-Thurs: 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Fri: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sat: 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Check out our Web site

www.apex-pt.com

In this issue...

1 "Oh, my aching head"
Identification and treatment of cervicogenic
headaches

2 "Oh, my aching head" (cont.)

Meet our Apex Staff
Christine Osman, PT - Pottstown-Coventry

Treat(ment) for your Tummy
Double layer pumpkin cheesecake

3 News from the Top
The latest happenings at our clinics

Blue Bell Offers Fitness
Apex's newest facility to open in February

Apex Gives Back
Community service at the Elmwood Park Zoo

4 Achieving the Apex
Stories of success from Apex patients

Cervical dysfunction: a surprising cause of headaches

Continued from page 1

So how does this pain develop? One of the most common causes is poor posture. Even activities as simple as propping oneself up in bed to read or watch TV can lead to stress and strain of the musculature of the neck. Sleeping positions can also be a contributing factor, as people all too often use too much pillow support or not enough. Also, individuals who spend extended periods of time at a computer without the correct body positioning often complain of neck pain and headaches.

The good news is that these types of headaches are preventable. The basic rule of thumb is to try to keep your neck in a neutral position as much as possible. A neutral position is one in which the slight forward curve, or lordosis, of the cervical spine is maintained.

If you believe that your sleeping position is a factor, you can try a small roll in your pillow that supports the curve in your neck. You can also use a down pillow that conforms to the curve of your spine.

If you spend hours at a computer, your workstation should be adjusted such that your monitor is at eye level and your knees are slightly lower than your hips. You should sit close enough to the monitor that you don't have to bend forward to see well, and use the armrests if your chair has them.

If you suspect that you may be suffering from cervicogenic

headaches, consult your physician. Your doctor can then determine if you are a reasonable candidate for physical therapy. Physical therapy has proven to be an extremely effective intervention for neck pain and the headaches associated with it.

A physical therapist will evaluate your posture and ask questions to determine if there are activities in your daily routine that may be contributing to your symptoms. Through the use of modalities - such as heat, cold or electrical stimulation - and manual therapy techniques - like massage and joint mobilizations - your therapist will work to reduce and eventually eliminate your symptoms.

Once your symptoms have been alleviated, your therapist will design a home exercise program to help you maintain your results, as well as manage your symptoms should they return. Your therapist is the perfect resource to help you assess the ergonomics of your workstation and other activities of daily living in order to avoid future problems. Remember, the ultimate goal of your physical therapy experience is to return you to your normal activities as quickly as possible, while also supplying you with the knowledge to minimize or eliminate your problem.

With the maintenance of good posture, flexibility and strength, most cervicogenic headaches can be avoided or managed. If you have questions or think you may be a good candidate for physical therapy, contact your physician.

Sleeping



The correct pillow should keep your spine straight and your neck in a "neutral" position.



At Your Workstation

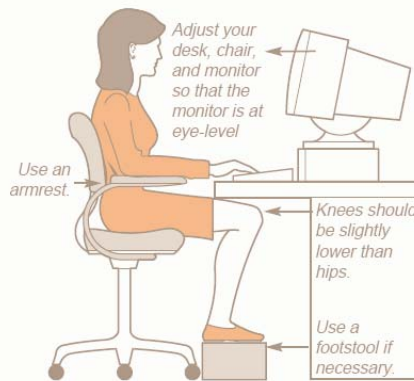


Photo courtesy of the American Physical Therapy Association

Meet our Apex Staff Treat_(ment) for your Tummy



**Christine Osman, PT, DPT,
OCS, FAAOMPT**
Pottstown-Coventry

Christine joined Apex Physical Therapy as the Managing Director of the Pottstown-Coventry office in October of 2008.

She graduated with her doctorate in Physical Therapy from Slippery Rock University in Slippery Rock, PA in 1998. Prior to this, she earned her Bachelor's of Science degree in Biology from Carlow

College in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

In 2006, Christine became a board certified Orthopedic Clinical Specialist through the American Physical Therapy Association. In the same year, she was awarded a Fellowship in Orthopedic Manual Physical Therapy from the American Academy of Orthopedic Manual Therapists.

Currently, Christine serves as a faculty member of the Manual Therapy Institute and is an active member of both the national and Pennsylvania sectors of the American Physical Therapy Association.

During her career, she has mentored and worked with physical therapists and physical therapy students to help them achieve their career goals.

Over the past 10 years working as a physical therapist, Christine has gained an extensive background treating Occupational Health and Workers Compensation injuries.

When she is not in the clinic, she enjoys spending time with her husband.



**Double Layer Pumpkin
Cheesecake**

A tasty dessert, sure to please fans of both pumpkin pie and cheesecake.

Ingredients

2 (8 oz) packages cream cheese
1/2 cup white sugar
1/2 tsp vanilla extract
2 eggs
1 (9-inch) prepared graham cracker crust
1/2 cup pumpkin puree
1/2 tsp ground cinnamon

1 pinch ground cloves
1 pinch ground nutmeg
1/2 cup whipped topping

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
2. In a large bowl, combine cream cheese, sugar and vanilla. Beat until smooth.
3. Blend in eggs one at a time.
4. Remove one cup of batter, spread into the bottom of the crust and set aside.
5. Add pumpkin, cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg to the remaining batter and stir gently until well blended.
6. Carefully spread new mixture over the batter in the crust.
7. Bake in preheated oven for 35 to 40 minutes or until the center is almost set.
8. Allow to cool, then refrigerate for 3 hours or overnight.
9. Cover with whipped topping before serving.

Congratulations are in order

Anne Schutt, DPT, has served as Managing Director of the Pottstown-Coventry office since it opened in March of 2005. In January of 2009, Anne will take on a new role within the company as Director of Operations. Her primary focus will be improving the daily operations of each of our five locations in order to make our patient's experience as positive as possible.

Welcome new staff members

Apex would like to welcome a few of our newest staff members:

- Christine Osman, Managing Director, Pottstown-Coventry
- Allison Clark, physical therapist, Pottstown-Coventry
- Chris Miller, physical therapist, Chalfont
- Renee DelliGatti, part-time receptionist, Lafayette Hill
- Mary Brown, part-time receptionist, Blue Bell

Bundles of Joy

The Apex family would like to announce the births of two new baby girls. Greg Schaab, physical therapist in the Blue Bell office, and his wife Toni welcomed Emily Hannah into the world on September 30, 2008. Dorothy Wagner, receptionist in the Blue Bell office, and her husband Andrew welcomed Ashley Lynn into the world on October 3, 2008. All members of both families are doing well.

Welcome back

Apex is excited to announce that John Vercher, MPT, has returned to the company and is currently seeing patients in our Lafayette Hill office. If you would like to begin physical therapy with John, please contact Lafayette Hill at 610-832-7510.



Blue Bell offers Fitness

After much anticipation, Apex Physical Therapy is looking forward to the grand opening of our new fitness center in **February of 2009**.

Located adjacent to the Blue Bell clinic's current location, this new facility will offer 5,000 square feet, dedicated to both physical therapy and fitness.

Some features of our newest facility will include:

- *MedEx strength training equipment*
- *Men's and women's locker rooms*
- *Monthly and yearly membership plans*
- *Personal training sessions*
- *Easy communication with physical therapists*

If you are interested in joining our new fitness facility, please contact Charlotte at 610-270-0300.

APEX GIVES BACK!!

COMMUNITY SERVICE DAY AT THE ELMWOOD PARK ZOO

On August 1, 2008, Apex Physical Therapy held its third annual Teambuilding Day at the Elmwood Park Zoo in Norristown.

In the past, Apex's teambuilding events served to bring our company's employees together so that we could all learn how to better work together as a single unit. However, this year, the company wanted to do something a little bigger than that - something that would benefit the local community, as well as our company as a whole.

Brian Warenius, Managing Director of the Blue Bell office, recommended helping the Elmwood Park Zoo - which was founded in the early 1920s - with its ongoing revitalization project.

Apex donated two handicap-accessible picnic tables and two benches - which we assembled as small teams - for the zoo's outdoor dining area. We then spent the remainder of our day planting trees, shrubs and flowers in a section of the zoo in need of a facelift.

As expected, the event was a great success for all parties involved. In the future, Apex looks forward to planning more community service events so that we all can experience the feeling of fulfillment we felt on August 1st once again.



Achieving the Apex

What patients are saying about their successes at our clinics

"I've had low back pain for almost a year. It was hard to bend to pick something up - to get something from a low shelf - to put something in the dishwasher. I felt old! Apex brought a focus to my problem and targeted exercises to improve my core strength. I also found the atmosphere at Apex to be great - relaxed, but professional and personalized. I am now 95 percent better and the chronic pain is gone."

- Janis V.

"I was hiking at the base of a waterfall when my feet slipped and went out from under me. When I finally pulled myself up, I found that I could not raise my arm. I knew right away that it was my rotator cuff. My surgeon at first recommended home exercises. Although I was diligent, I was not making enough progress. I contacted Apex. They were great in analyzing my condition. I have had other rehabs, but none so rewarding as working with the therapists at Apex. After two months of therapy, I have regained most of my movement and look forward to going swimming, sailing and ice skating soon. Thanks again, Apex, for a job well done."

- Tim G.

"God was with me and my doctor on the day he sent me to Apex. I arrived, moving more like a statue than a human being. Now, I am feeling greatly improved! I can tie my shoes! I can get around almost as I was before my problems occurred! Thanks to a great staff, excellent facility and caring professionals, I hope to enjoy life as I did before."

- Kevin B.

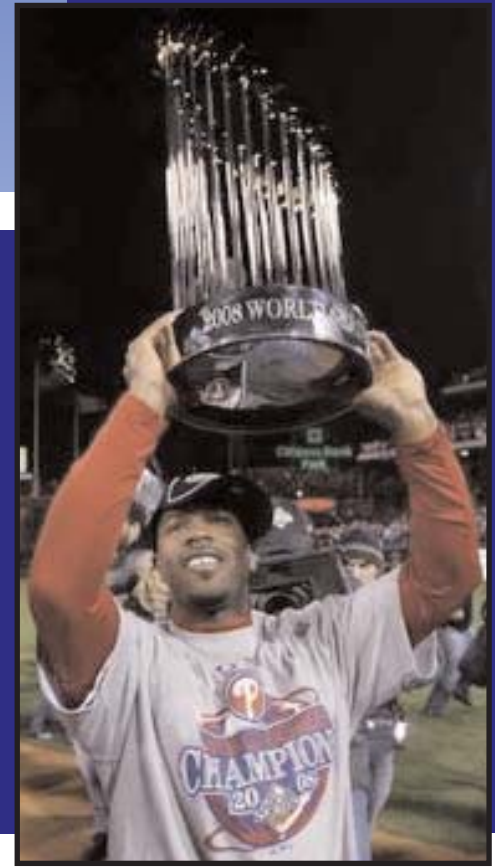


Photo courtesy of Reuters



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