

TENSION HEADACHES



Overview

Tension headaches, the most common type of headache, are characterized by mild to moderate pain that is usually focused across the forehead.

Causes

The exact cause of tension headaches is not fully understood. Traditionally, they have been believed to be linked to muscle tightness in the head and neck. But research has shown that they may stem from changes in certain brain chemicals (such as serotonin and endorphins).

Triggers

Tension headaches can result from a variety of triggers. Known triggers can include allergens, poor eyesight, poor posture, stress, anxiety, poor ergonomics in the work environment, teeth clenching, and alcoholic beverages.

Symptoms

The most common symptom of tension headaches is mild to moderate, aching head pain. This pain may spread across the forehead, or may feel like a tight band around the entire head. Other symptoms may include sensation of tightness on the sides or back of the head, tenderness of the scalp, mild nausea and loss of appetite. Symptoms may be short-lived, or they may continue for up to a week.

Treatment

Tension headaches can be treated effectively with a variety of methods. Learning to avoid triggers, combined with preventative medications may help reduce the frequency of these headaches, and pain medications can help relieve symptoms when a headache does occur. Other options may include cervical or facial nerve blocks and cervical epidural injections.