

## Holding Headaches at Bay

### Bodywork Eases Migraines and Tension Headaches

Cathy Ulrich

"Do you get headaches?" I asked Cindy. She had come to see me for massage to address her neck and shoulder pain but hadn't mentioned headaches.

"Well, yes," she said. "I've always had headaches and, now that you mention it, they seem to be worse when my neck hurts." Cindy went on to say she suffered from them as often as 2-3 times a week and typically treated them with ibuprofen.

Like many Americans, Cindy suffers from chronic, frequent headaches. Her neck pain finally prompted her to seek help, but she was so used to the headaches, she thought they were something she simply had to live with.

#### MIGRAINES.

Migraine headaches occur when the blood vessels in the brain become dilated, usually due to a chemical reaction, such as food allergies or a stress response. They often start with visual disturbances and quickly develop into severe head pain accompanied by nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and sensitivity to light. They're usually felt on one side of the head, but can be on both sides. Migraines are often managed with medications and avoidance of foods known to trigger them, such as red wine, chocolate, aged cheese, and nuts. However, some bodywork techniques can also be effective in easing migraines or decreasing the frequency of these painful headaches.

#### TENSION HEADACHES.

Exaggerated by stress, tension headaches are related to poor posture, jaw problems (such as temporomandibular joint disorder, or TMJ), and neck pain. Many people describe a headache that starts at the base of the skull and then moves in an arc over the ears and behind

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*Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity.*

-Hippocrates



Freedom from chronic headaches is an option many Americans don't even realize is possible.

What Cindy didn't understand was that frequent headaches are not normal and, with a little proactive planning, there is something that can be done to manage and even prevent them.

### Types of Headaches

Headaches come in many varieties. Following is a short list of the most common types.

#### Office Hours and Contact

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the eyes. Tension headaches are most often caused or exacerbated by poor posture, work station positions, and body mechanics, creating undue stress on the upper neck muscles.

#### MIXED HEADACHES.

The term mixed headache is used to describe a tension headache that leads to a migraine. Typically, the tension headache starts first and the chemicals produced from the pain of it create conditions for a migraine to develop. In people with patterns of mixed headaches, the best way to avoid the onset of a migraine is to treat the tension headache.

## Bodywork Options

A treatment regimen that includes bodywork, attention to body position, and stress management can help prevent or greatly reduce the frequency of headaches, in turn reducing your reliance on medication and the need to avoid food triggers. There are many different bodywork techniques, each with specific approaches for treating headaches. Following is a short list of techniques often effective in treating recurring headaches.

#### SWEDISH MASSAGE.

A tension headache, by its very name, implies the presence of stress and tension. Swedish massage, on the other hand, promotes relaxation and relieves muscle tension. When muscles become tight due to stress or poor posture, they eventually adapt a chronically shortened state. Swedish massage teaches the body how to let go of muscle tension and resets muscle tone.

#### INTEGRATIVE BODYWORK.

Rolfing, Hellerwork, Structural Integration, and CORE are examples of the types of bodywork designed to improve posture and structural alignment. A primary cause of chronic headaches is poor posture, which produces tension in the neck and shoulders because the weight of the head is not properly balanced on top of the spine. Integrative bodywork can produce lasting postural change for greater ease of movement. By selectively freeing the soft tissues, integrative bodywork literally can change postural alignment and remove the stresses and strains on the muscles that cause headaches.

#### DEEP TISSUE THERAPIES.

The integrative therapies mentioned above, as well as neuromuscular therapy and myofascial release, use similar techniques to free connective tissue. A chronically tensed muscle tends to maintain that tension, even after the stressful event has passed. Deep tissue techniques free the connective tissue glue, creating a new way for the muscle to function.

#### REFLEXOLOGY.

Like acupuncture, reflexology works to move energy blockages in the body. By stimulating points on the feet that correspond to organs in the body, reflexologists can promote relaxation, reduce pain, and restore energy flow. Several scientific studies have shown that reflexology is a viable treatment for migraines, in some cases working as well as, or better than, medication--and without the side effects.

#### CRANIOSACRAL THERAPY.

Craniosacral therapy addresses the inherent, gentle, rhythmic movement of the bones in the skull and their effect on the fluid that surrounds, bathes, and cushions the brain and spinal cord and runs throughout the body. Cranial bones move in miniscule amounts as a response to the production and absorption of cranial fluid. With head trauma, whiplash injury, or even severe stress, cranial bone movement can be compromised, resulting in headaches, dizziness, ringing in the ears, or vision disturbances. This therapy restores the normal movement of the cranial bones and fluid.

By addressing the root of the problem, regularly scheduled bodywork sessions can greatly reduce headaches as well as your need for medication. Remember, headaches are not normal, and you don't have to live with them.



**Reflexology has proven as, or more, effective than medication--without the many side effects.**

# Nature's Nutritional Wonder

## Cruciferous Vegetables

Cruciferous vegetables are powerful foods that can help prevent many forms of cancer, reduce existing cancer tumors, and aid in the prevention of heart disease. Broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, arugula, kale, and Brussels sprouts all contain isothiocyanates--a group of chemicals that break down carcinogens in the body, helping to metabolize toxins. Studies show that people who eat two to three servings of cruciferous vegetables each week lower their risk of breast cancer, colon cancer, and lung cancer. A National Cancer Institute study found that eating three helpings of crucifers a week dropped prostate cancer risk by 50 percent. The powerful chemicals in these veggies also reduce homocysteine levels, a known precursor to heart disease.

Cruciferous vegetables are low in calories and high in fiber and the chromium found in these foods helps regulate blood sugar and insulin function, key factors in keeping diabetes at bay. Even with all the benefits that crucifers provide, many people refuse to

eat them because of their strong taste. But a little creativity can go a long way in making these wonderful foods palatable: try cream of broccoli soup, cauliflower au gratin, stuffed cabbage, or the recipe below--the possibilities are endless.

### BRUSSELS SPROUTS FOR THE MEAT-AND-POTATOES EATER

*1 pound fresh Brussels sprouts, washed, stems trimmed, and outer leaves removed*  
*1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil*  
*2 tablespoons unsalted butter*  
*3 tablespoons cider vinegar*  
*1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese*  
*Salt and pepper, to taste*

Thinly slice Brussels sprouts, either in a food processor fitted with a slicing blade, or by hand. Heat a heavy, nonstick skillet. Add olive oil and butter, swirling the pan so that the butter melts. Saute sliced Brussels sprouts for 5 minutes. Add cider vinegar and grated Parmesan, stirring briefly to incorporate. Add salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Serves four--who will all be healthier for it!



Cruciferous veggies help ward off disease.

# Shea Butter

## For Your Complexion and More

*Shelley Burns, N.D.*

Shea butter comes from the nut of the shea tree (pronounced shay) found in the tropics of Africa, primarily West Africa. It offers many benefits as a topical moisturizer for skin and hair, and improves other skin problems and appearance.

As well as providing relief from minor dermatological conditions like eczema, lesser burns, and acne, shea butter can be used as a natural sunscreen and for stretch-mark prevention during pregnancy. Other benefits include the evening out of skin tone, reducing blemishes, and restoring skin elasticity.

Shea butter easily penetrates the skin, allowing skin to breathe without clogging pores. It contains high

concentrations of linoleic acid, which provide skin protection at a cellular level, as well as vitamins A, E, and F, which protect against premature wrinkles. Vitamin F in shea butter also soothes rough, dry, or chapped skin.

Healing though it may be, shea butter undergoes a rigorous path in its journey from overseas to the faces and bodies of your clients. The fruit from the shea tree is cultivated, cracked, grilled, pounded, and boiled. The shea butter is then scooped out of the nut and left to cool.

Properties of shea butter include unsaponifiables--substances that cannot decompose into acids, salts, or alcohol. For that reason, shea butter is extremely

absorbable, even more so than soybean and avocado oils.

There are three types of shea butter extraction and just two of the three end products of these extractions should be used. Unrefined shea butter in its pure form is yellow. Refined shea butter is processed but still contains many of its natural components. Either is fine to use. Highly refined shea butter may well have lost its healing properties and can include such solvents as hexane, which may cause nerve damage. It is pure white and should be avoided. Another note of caution: shea butter is not recommended for people with nut and latex allergies, and some experts also discourage its use by people with chocolate allergies.

*Whatever words  
we utter should  
be chosen with  
care, for people  
will hear them  
and be  
influenced by  
them, for good  
or ill.*

-Buddha

The way you think, the way you behave, the way you eat can influence your life by 30 to 50 years.

Deepak Chopra

Massage can help you manage your stress levels. Massage is not only effective in decreasing muscle pain but lowers blood pressure and elevates mood.

Schedule your massage today.

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