



Telephone: (949) 297-3838
www.painspecialistsoc.com

Headaches

Headaches are categorized as a primary headache (tension, migraine, cluster, etc.) or secondary to an underlying cause. Secondary headaches are less prevalent. Primary headaches are treated symptomatically to bring relief and prevent recurrence. Secondary headaches are approached with the goal of treating the underlying cause. The Pain Specialists of Orange County will help treat and manage your headache pain.

Treatment & Types of Headaches

Our pain specialists in Orange County will obtain a detailed history and physical to determine the type of headache pain and appropriate treatment.

Tension-Type Headache

A tension-type headache is known to be the most common headache and can occur at all ages. The exact cause is unknown at this time. Those with episodic tension-type headaches will have pain of mild to moderate intensity lasting from a few hours to a few days. Tension headaches are often described as a tightness or pressure as a band across the side of the head to the forehead. It is often bilateral and general not associated with nausea or light sensitivity. Tension-type headaches are generally not as severe as migraine headaches, which have more of a throbbing pain instead of a pressurized ache. Specific tests for tension-type headaches are currently nonexistent.

Some factors influencing treatment options include how the headache affects the lifestyle of the patient, what type of therapy has been attempted previously, and if the patient has misused/abused any previous drugs. If these headaches occur frequently and are severe enough that the patient is forced to skip social events or work, they are sometimes given prophylactic medications to decrease the intensity and frequency of the headaches.

Management of these headaches can include different classes of pharmacologic therapy as well as biofeedback, acupuncture, cognitive therapy, and relaxation therapies.

Migraine Headache

Migraine is a chronic disorder resulting in episodic attacks of headaches and associated symptoms. The headaches can last up to three days. They are generally characterized as a throbbing or pounding feeling on one side of the head, but they can be bilateral. Nausea, vomiting, phonophobia (sensitivity to sound), and photophobia (sensitivity to light) are other possible associated symptoms. The disorder occurs more frequently in female patients, and they often have a family history of migraine headaches. Some patients



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experience an event called aura which can be an alteration in sight, smelling, and hearing before the onset of the migraine.

There is no specific test for diagnosing migraines. Your pain specialist will evaluate the frequency and severity of the migraine headaches before choosing a treatment option. Management may include prevention of the migraines with different types of medications, identifying and avoiding triggers and botox injections. Abortive medications are also available, but caution must be exercised as overuse of medications to treat headaches can result in medication overuse headaches or "rebound headaches."

Cluster Headache

A cluster headache is a condition characterized by one sided headaches which occur in clusters for a period of time then are separated by pain free intervals of at least 1 month. Unlike migraines, they are more common in males and are much less common than tension and migraine headaches. The onset of this type of headache is often sudden and severe around an eye and temple, but can radiate from the neck to the temple. Tearing of the eye, drooping eyelid, stuffy nose and flushing or sweating over the affected area are common associated symptoms of cluster headaches. Often times there can be triggers identified for these headaches which may include smoking, sleeping, alcohol, certain odors, heat, particular foods, etc.).

There is no testing for a cluster headache, only for other diseases that mimic it. Your pain physician will consider advanced imaging such as an MRI for patients who may have cluster headaches. Patients who believe they may have cluster headache can see a pain management specialist to discuss different options for treatment.

Our highly trained pain treatment physicians care about improving your pain and quality of life. For more information on how Pain Specialists of Orange County can help treat your Headache pain, please contact us at 949-297-3838.