



Hands on Physical Therapy *Advanced Massage Therapy* *Newsletter*

Volume 2, Issue 2

March/April 2006

Introducing the HOPT Wellness Series Headaches: What You Can Do to Help

Most of us have had a headache at some point in our lives, others live with "chronic" headaches. Headaches can be associated with many factors including stress and tension, postural imbalances, allergy and sinus problems, hormone imbalances, and migraine-related complexes. In this article, we will focus on the impact of our behavioral patterns on headaches.

Physical stress, emotional stress, tension and postural imbalances affect all of us in some way. Continual muscular tension and soft tissue bracing patterns can lead to myofascial restrictions and pain. As Myofascial Release practitioners, we find that no matter what type of headache, there is almost always tissue tightness, tension, and myofascial restriction surrounding the head, shoulders, neck, face and jaw. Often we even find myofascial restrictions extending down to the sacrum (the base of our spine) and the pelvis. This results in the constant compression of nerves, blood vessels, bones, and joints in these areas.

It is critical that we become aware of our behavioral patterns as well as our individual and unique anatomical variations in order to address the underlying causes of our headaches. Do you ever find yourself slumping in front of the computer, television, or steering wheel of your car, with your head hanging forward? Continual posturing of the head in a forward position compresses the space between the base of the cranium and the top of the neck (the sub-occipital space). Also our jaw automatically opens, requiring us to clench the jaw to keep it closed. Over time the tissue in this area adapts and remains in a shortened position, pressing the bones together, contributing to our headache. At the same time, stress creates additional muscle tension in the body which exaggerates the postural imbalance, further squeezing vital structures, specifically, the dural tube.

The dural tube is a thick connective tissue that covers and protects the brain and spinal cord. It extends like a

stocking from the top of our head to the base of our spine. Because the dural tube contains the cerebral spinal fluid, compression and restriction through this area creates pressure much like that in a water balloon, resulting in headaches.

The balance of the cranial bones affects the amount of pressure placed on the dural tube and the head. Our cranium is actually a "puzzle" of bones that expands and contracts very subtly like expansion joints on bridges, to accommodate the fluid flow in the brain and spinal cord. If micro movements along cranial structures did not occur every time cerebral fluid is pumped, our head would explode or at least feel like it could. Restriction of the tissue between the cranial bones creates undue pressures on the dural system and the head leading to headaches.

So what can we at HOPT do to help you with your headaches? As Myofascial Release therapists, we are highly trained in techniques to decompress the base of the cranium, lengthen the dural tube and balance the cranial bones; all of which can significantly reduce pain and tension and increase mobility in the head, spine, shoulder and jaw. Also, we at HOPT feel that it is extremely important to guide and assist our patients in body awareness principles and practice. If you are not aware of your behavioral patterns that contribute to headaches, how can you change them? Awareness is empowering! Awareness is the key.

What YOU can do:

Self treatment is essential. It is how we change the behavioral pattern that is associated with our pain. When we learn new ways to take care of our bodies, we leave behind the old patterns that may have contributed to our pain. The following are some self treatment techniques:

Tune In

Take time each day to quiet yourself and notice your breath. Notice if your breath goes easily into your body



Continued from Page 1...

or if there is any resistance. Next, imagine your *inhale* filling your head, neck, shoulders and down your spine.

Notice any tension or bracing in these areas. With each *exhale*, allow your entire body to soften. Practice this technique throughout the day or whenever you feel tension building in your head, neck, shoulders or body in general. Couple this method with the following techniques.

Sphenoid Lift

Imbalance of the sphenoid bone, a cranial bone, can contribute to headaches. While sitting, gently place your index and second finger on the side of your head just behind your eye socket (the soft space). With your elbows supported on a table or pillows, gently shift the tissue forward without actually gliding on the skin. "Tune In" and wait at least two minutes or until you feel a release or softening.

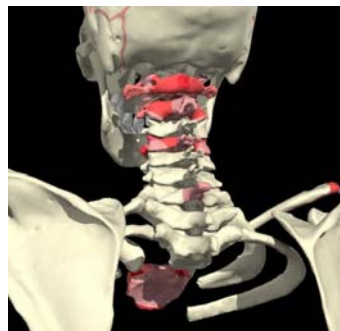
Ear Pull

Grasp the lower outer edge of your ear and gently pull out and back until you feel a gentle stretch. With your elbows supported, "Tune In" and wait here at least two minutes or until you feel a release of softening of the tissues.

Occipital Release

Put two tennis balls in a tube sock and tie a knot on both ends. Lie down on your back and place the tennis balls behind your head, just above the base of your skull. If the tennis balls tend to slip into the neck space, slide them higher on your head. "Tune In" and allow your body to soften into the tennis balls for 5 to 15 minutes.

The more you participate by doing your home exercises, the more those activities will integrate into your daily life. This will make an even more profound impact on your continued treatment sessions at HOPT. Your increased body awareness allows our therapists to assist you even further. Remember, healing is a process not an event.



Kristi McGrath, PT

PNEUMOTHORAX

As you may or may not know, I underwent surgery in October 2005 to have a hole repaired in my diaphragm. The hole was discovered when I developed a spontaneous pneumothorax (medical speak for a partially or completely collapsed lung with no chest trauma). Oddly, my symptoms of rib pain and a strange rolling sensation within the chest when I would bend over, never registered with me that there was anything wrong with my actual lung. And I think that I am pretty body aware! I have a very rare form of the spontaneous pneumothorax in that its recurrence is related to fluctuations in my hormones. For at least a year, I had been having one every month. The good thing about that was that they always disappeared in a couple of days. Anyway, I succumbed to the VATS (video assisted thoracic surgery) during which time they repaired the hole and inserted a chest tube to evacuate the air in the space between my lung and the wall of the thoracic cage. I wanted to share with you some of the lessons I learned during this really weird time.

- Although I think that most rib pain has a musculoskeletal component, apparently you can have significant rib pain that is purely visceral, in this case the lung detaching from the wall of the cage. It is wise to get this checked out if it persists for too long, especially when accompanied by the feeling of a tennis ball rolling around in the chest when you bend over. Important note...this is not normal!
- The mind is a funny thing. As "pneumothorax" can be a scary word for most, when my doctor called to tell me what the x-ray showed, I was happy to hear the "p" word....at least it was not a tumor.
- People in the ER treat you very special if they think your collapsing lung puts you in a lot of breathing distress, especially if you look healthy. I think they were pitying the ignorant woman whose lung was collapsing and she wasn't even looking like she had any idea. Did I say how happy I was that it was not a tumor!
- It is possible to dance at a wedding even with a partially collapsed lung. Ask Erin.

Continued from Page 2

- It's ok to be afraid and to let those around you know that you are.
- My couch is more comfortable than my bed.
- Being unable to wear a bra gives you great freedom to not to have to wear one.
- Definitely let any and everyone you know cook meals for you, clean your house, take your kids to all their activities, bring you flowers, take your grocery list and do your shopping for you and even help you wash your hair while you recover (or for as long as you can milk it). Give your body the time it needs to recover while you lay around or sleep. It's ok to let go of any anxiety you feel over not doing these things yourself.
- Anesthesia and morphine are not for everyone.
- Hydrocodone, on the other hand is fabulous.
- Skin glue as opposed to stitches is one of the coolest inventions of this century.
- Be taken care of as soon as possible by caring people, especially if they are as skilled as Jody, Patti and Tammy.
- HGTV has some great daytime programming, especially Candace Olson.
- The diaphragm corrections magically helped me with my chronic SI joint pain.
- I know what it feels like to wear only half a corset.
- Let anyone come and pray with you, even if you don't know them.
- The night nurses hold the key to comfort and happiness.
- Not being able to drive is a real get-you-downer.
- Count your blessings, even in the throws of pain and anxiety. It is a very grounding thing. Thank God for your health every day. Thank him for the gift of great families, co-workers and friends. A loving, supportive husband and sister are priceless.
- Hormones are powerful little elements.
- And in case you all have not figured it out yet for yourselves, these incredible women and man that I have the honor and privilege to work with every day are the best clinicians and friends I have ever worked with. I think it is a Godsend that your lives are touched by them.

I am not "cured" yet, as I continue to have periodic pneumos, again related to fluctuations in my hormones. I con-

tinue to work with various doctors, alternative healers, HOPT and am doing my own research to find any answers I can. My goal is to eliminate the pneumos altogether or at least get to a level of peace with coexisting with them.

2006 is going to be the year that I make discoveries about my purpose, grow in my own spirituality and hopefully make a deeper connection with my own patients because of this experience. I definitely would not have chosen this path, but I am willing to make my way down it, clumsily at times, and be open to the discoveries and lessons along the way. I am honored that many of you have willingly taken steps on this journey with me and your support and concern is more helpful than you can know.

Katrina Barton, PT

ADVANCED MASSAGE THERAPY



Massage therapy is a great way to introduce loved ones to our great work. It also allows our patients to continue Myofascial Release treatments even when you are no longer under the care of a physician, to help you maintain your current level of function and prevent future injuries.

We offer one hour and one and half hour massages that are truly a benefit to each and everyone.

Massages that are available include, but are not limited to, Myofascial Release, Hot Stone, Cranio-Sacral, Swedish and Deep Tissue.

Call today for a gift certificate!!



Sedona Intensive Therapeutic Retreat 2006

"Maybe it's time for you to really put yourself on top!"



Join us in Sedona, Arizona and see things from a different perspective. Our Intensive Therapeutic Retreat dates are: March 24th-28th, June 16th-20th and October 6th-10th, 2006.

The ideal surroundings of the Red Rocks and Oak Creek Canyon help to foster an environment of relaxation and inner awareness.



Please contact Tammy if you would like to sign up today or need additional information.

MYOFASCIAL HEALING SEMINAR

The Myofascial Healing Seminar will teach you how to treat yourself and loved ones. Through workshops and lectures, participants will learn how to eliminate their pain and energize their body. The Myofascial Healing Seminar is held in Sedona, AZ through the Myofascial Treatment Centers. John F. Barnes, PT (our teacher), is the presenter for this seminar.

Hands on Physical Therapy's Intensive Therapeutic Retreat dates correspond to the dates for John F. Barnes Myofascial Healing Seminar in 2006. This will allow you to enhance your treatment response by combining the two experiences.

***Please note: Hands on Physical Therapy is not affiliated with John F. Barnes or the Myofascial Healing Seminar.** We believe so strongly in this therapeutic experience that we are willing to accommodate treatment schedules so patients can attend both seminars and maximize their healing process.

If you are interested in attending The Myofascial Healing Seminar, you must register through Myofascial Treatment Centers. Please let us know as there is a discount for 2 or more persons attending this seminar and we may be able to help facilitate the discount. For more information on The Myofascial Healing Seminar, go to www.myofascialrelease.com and look under "Seminars to heal you".

Love the treatment here at HOPT? Well, now you can learn self help techniques to take home with you! Kristi McGrath, PT, teaches a variety of self treatments such as restorative stretching and body awareness. These techniques will increase your mobility and flexibility and decrease your pain.

Sign up and make your body happy today! Our classes for March and April 2006 are:

Tuesday, March 7 @ 1:00-2:00pm

Wednesday, March 22 @ 10:30-11:30am

Tuesday, April 4 @ 1:30-2:30pm

Wednesday, April 19 @ 10:30-11:30am

Hands on Physical Therapy/ Advanced Massage Therapy

301 Hester's Crossing #160
Round Rock, TX 78681

Phone: 512 310-1928

Fax: 512 310-9180

Email: handsonptrr@earthlink.net

Website: handsonpt.net