
OVERCOMING

HEADACHES

and

MIGRAINES



*Clinically Proven
Cure for Chronic Pain*

LISA MORRONE, PT

What health-care experts are saying about books by Lisa Morrone, PT



Overcoming Headaches and Migraines:

“It is with genuine excitement I endorse *Overcoming Headaches and Migraines*, which provides a complete and understandable guide for both the practitioner and the patient...Lisa Morrone’s extensive preparation, research, and years of experience are reflected in the safe and clinically proven techniques she recommends. A must-read for primary and specialty providers...and of course, anyone who suffers from headaches.”

—William Robert Spencer, MD, FAAP
ear, nose, and throat specialist



Overcoming Back and Neck Pain:

“This book takes a very practical approach to the key things patients really need to know. So I recommend it to all sufferers from spine problems. It’s also a great adjunct for sharing information in a clinical setting. I appreciate Lisa’s treatment of every person as someone who has not only a body and mind, but a spirit as well.”

—Kent Keyser, MS, PT, OCS, COMT, ATC, FFCFMT, FAAOMPT
practicing and teaching physical therapist

“*Overcoming Back and Neck Pain* is unique—it enables the nonmedical person to understand and manage their pain, but it is comprehensive enough to be an excellent resource and reference guide for physicians who take care of these problems. Well done.”

—Warwick Green. MD, orthopedic surgeon

“A treasure chest of information, easily understood, and presented with clarity, wit, and optimism...a truly enjoyable journey from head to toe. A definite re-read!”

—**Mary G. Flanagan, RPA**

Physician assistant

Adjunct Professor, Touro College PA Program

OVERCOMING

HEADACHES

and

MIGRAINES

LISA MORRONE, P.T.



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS

EUGENE, OREGON

All Scripture quotations are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright©1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

All emphasis in Scripture quotations has been added by the author.

Cover by Koechel Peterson & Associates, Inc., Minneapolis, Minnesota

Cover photo © Agnieszka Pastuszek-Maksim / iStockphoto; interior photos and back-cover author photo © Peter Morrone

Illustrations by Rose C. Miller

Lisa Morrone is published in association with William K. Jensen Literary Agency, 119 Bampton Court, Eugene, Oregon 97404.

This book is not intended to take the place of sound professional medical advice. Neither the author nor the publisher assumes any liability for possible adverse consequences as a result of the information contained herein.

OVERCOMING HEADACHES AND MIGRAINES

Copyright © 2008 by Lisa Morrone, P.T.

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Morrone, Lisa, 1967-

Overcoming headaches and migraines / Lisa Morrone.

p. cm.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7369-2169-5 (pbk.)

ISBN-10: 0-7369-2169-9 (pbk.)

1. Headache—Popular works. 2. Migraine—Popular works. I. Title.

RC392.M72 2008

616.8'491—dc22

2008002132

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 / BP-SK / 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



To my husband, Peter—This book has been made complete by your hard work, care, and concern for its every detail. You are a wonderful first-line editor, photographer, encourager, and all-around “Help, I’m having a problem with my computer!” guy. I love you, and I am blessed to be your wife.

To my children, Casey and Adam—Thank you for giving up many a Saturday with Mom and Dad because we were “busy working on Mom’s book.” I am proud to watch you both take on the character of your heavenly Father as you grow in Him. Thank you for being so patient. Your prayers helped make this book a reality.

To my “headache mentor,” Dr. Howard Makofsky—It was back in 1989 when you first taught me about the neck and its involvement in headaches. In so doing, you lit a fire under me that continues to burn today. Thank you for sharing your resources with me as I wrote this book.

To my dear friends—I am forever grateful to you for your faithfulness in upholding me and this book in your prayers.

To those who have shared their personal headache accounts and journeys to healing within this book—Thank you for opening up a window into your lives so others may find hope and healing by identifying with your words.

To Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior—You have blessed me with the ability to acquire and clearly communicate my knowledge. Thank you for continuing to provide me opportunities to educate patients, colleagues, students of physical therapy, and now the many readers of this book. May the hope and healing I offer them always be sprinkled with your Hope and Healing. To God be the Glory, great things He has done!



CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	9
<i>Pain, Pain, Go Away...</i>	11
Part 1: Why Won't My Head Stop Hurting?	
Chapter 1 <i>What Kind of Headache Do I Have Anyway?</i>	19
Chapter 2 <i>Could Something Else Be Wrong?</i>	35
Part 2: Headaches That Can Be a Real Pain in the Neck	
Chapter 3 <i>Tension-type and Cervicogenic Headaches</i>	49
Chapter 4 <i>Do-It-Yourself: Healing Through Posture Changes</i>	69
Chapter 5 <i>Do-It-Yourself: Relief from Stiff Muscles, Stiff Joints, and Disc Pain</i>	81
Chapter 6 <i>Do-It-Yourself: Core Strengthening and Proper Breathing</i>	91
Chapter 7 <i>Putting Yourself in the Hands of a Professional</i>	109
Part 3: Brain Pain	
Chapter 8 <i>Migraines and Cluster-type Headaches</i>	125
Chapter 9 <i>Figuring Out Your Triggers</i>	141
Chapter 10 <i>Defusing Your Triggers</i>	151
Chapter 11 <i>Prescription for Relief</i>	163
Part 4: Emotional Headaches	
Chapter 12 <i>Navigating Through the Seas of Discontent</i>	181
<i>Headache Resources</i>	195
<i>Notes</i>	197

Foreword

by Dr. Howard W. Makofsky

Headache is the third most common cause of missed work, and it affects every area of a person's life," say world-renowned headache experts William Young, MD, and Stephen Silberstein, MD. How sad that millions of individuals around the globe are taking medicine to do nothing more than cope with chronic headaches, when many of these may respond to the types of physical treatments covered in Lisa Morrone's *Overcoming Headaches and Migraines*.

A mentor of mine once said, "Medical conditions should be treated medically and physical problems should be treated physically." As a physical therapist, researcher, and professor, I congratulate Lisa for providing chronic headache sufferers with the physical self-help tools necessary to manage and relieve their chronic pain. This offers hope to people who are many times resigned to a life of silent suffering and despair.

Why exactly is this news so good? There is scientific evidence suggesting that not only neck-based headache (cervicogenic headache), but also tension-type headache—the most common form of chronic primary headache—are correlated to *forward head posture, myofascial trigger points, and weakness of the deep neck flexor muscles*. Though you may not be familiar with all these conditions, they are common among headache sufferers—and all of them are treatable! There are some who suggest that even migraines are contributed to by these physical impairments and are therefore treatable using the techniques described in this book.

For these reasons and others, *Overcoming Headaches and Migraines*

is a gift, not only to headache sufferers, but also to those in the health professions who are committed to helping them.

—Howard W. Makofsky, PT, DHSc, OCS
*Former Co-Director, Headache Center,
Southside Hospital, Bay Shore, New York
Associate Professor, New York Institute of Technology
Adjunct Professor, Touro College
Clinical Assistant Professor, SUNY Stony Brook*

Pain, Pain, Go Away...

You can feel it coming on again. Mild as it may be now, history tells you it's going to get worse before it gets better. Just the thought of it tenses your shoulders and sets your jaw. What *won't* you get done today? How bad will the pain get? Will you be able to do anything to change it?

As you ponder these questions, you feel your eyelids lowering to half-mast. Every time a headache occurs, your entire head and face want to “draw the blinds and close for business.” Headache is unique that way. Unlike back, neck, shoulder, or knee pain, it has a “power down” affect on its victims. Voice tone changes, eye brightness dims, facial expressions dampen, and attention is directed from the people and tasks before you to the storm swirling through your head. Every simple thought or small movement of your head, neck, or face intensifies your pain.



The statistics on headaches are staggering. As many as 45 million Americans have chronic, severe headaches that can be disabling, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) and the American Council for Headache Education (ACHE). In a 2004 survey, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control found that the percentages of persons aged 18 to 64 who had suffered from either a severe headache or migraine in the prior three months looked like this:

18-44 years old	18%
45-54 years old	17%
55-64 years old	12%

Headaches result in more than 8 million doctor visits per year in the United States. *One billion dollars* are spent annually on over-the-counter headache medication! And migraine sufferers alone lose more than 157 million workdays annually because of headache pain. As you can imagine, that is a tremendous loss in productivity.

Though you are in the company of many others, you may feel very alone in your struggle against chronic, life-altering head pain. Onlookers, even family and friends, want to know why you are so affected by “just a headache.” The mild and occasional headaches they have experienced go away 15 minutes after they pop an Advil. Why can’t you just do the same? They don’t understand—and in their defense, they *can’t* understand. A well-known proverb could be restated thus: “Unless you wore my head during my last headache...” Only you will ever experience what *your* headaches feel like.

Life lived with headaches is an experience of head-splitting pounding, viselike pressure, “sharp shooters”—it’s enough to make you sick. For some of you, that is just what it does. First, you see a light show (for free), then nausea comes over you and something comes up—literally. Your only hope is, “This too shall pass.” You find a dark, quiet room where you can hunker down and ride out the storm. Maybe you’ll be able to sleep it off...

Others of you suffer with frequent “traditional” headaches that differ in intensity from day to day. What began as an innocent once-a-week pain interruption has now become a three-to-four-times-a-week intruder. For some of you, multiple headaches per week eventually became steady, constant, chronic headaches. Now, from waking to bedtime you are never without a headache. You are even beginning to forget what it is like to *not* have pain in your head.

One Person’s Headache Journey

Bonnie was a typical example of a patient of mine who displayed

this progressive, chronic type of headache. She came to me desperate to get rid of the pain in her head. The headaches she had suffered throughout her childhood began to be peppered with migraines every now and then throughout her college years and early adulthood. Two years before, her headaches had gone from occurring a few times a week to remaining constant from morning through night. Worse yet was the pain in the back of her head. It had now spread into her left eye, and she felt a constant, painful throb that increased every time she closed her eye to blink.

Bonnie was at her wit's end. She had been to an ENT (ear, nose, and throat doctor, or otolaryngologist), who had ruled out a sinus problem. She was examined by an ophthalmologist—eye doctor—who assured her nothing was wrong with her left eye. Next she received half a dozen treatments from a chiropractor, who adjusted the joints of her lower neck, but without any change in her symptoms. Frustrated, she decided to manage her own pain the only way she knew how—with over-the-counter medications. Having used these medicines over the span of many months, she was noticing they were becoming less and less effective. She also worried about the effect that taking so much medication would have on her liver. (Maybe this sounds somewhat like your own headache journey.)

Through specially targeted physical therapy treatment and the application of the principles and education found in this book, Bonnie finally discovered the true *cause* of her headaches. Her recovery soon followed. (I will tell more about her discovery and recovery journey in chapter 3.)

More Problems and Consequences

Trauma-based headaches are also common among people I see. Like them, you may have been in a car accident or suffered some type of impact to your head or neck. Right afterward, you were sore. Then slowly your headache was birthed, and over time you have watched it grow. Now it has grown too big to ignore.

Possibly you are like many of my other headache patients, whose headache pain is so predictable they can almost set their watch by it.

You know for a fact that by 10 a.m., tension will begin to build in your neck. And soon your skull will tighten with pain. It may begin as a gentle squeeze at the back of your head, but you know where it will end up by 2 p.m.—right behind your eyes. And when it reaches its final destination, even shifting your eyes from right to left will cause the pressure to escalate. Time to pop some pills.

Something's got to change. Your headaches are significantly altering your life, and in all the wrong ways. While in the midst of a headache you may find you are irritable, less productive at your tasks, having difficulty concentrating, and withdrawing from people. The withdrawal has to do in part with noise avoidance, but it has even more to do with the fact you are feeling crummy overall. It hurts your head to be animated, to talk and to smile. You'd just rather be left alone.

If your headache interferes with sleep, you may be living life run-down and sleep-deprived. You hope people won't judge your continual yawning as boredom or lack of interest on your part. Worse yet, headaches that come and go have created "anticipation anxiety" in you, because you worry about the timing of your next attack. Where and when will the next ambush by the headache monster come? What part of your day—or how many *days*—will you be robbed of before he lets go of your head?

Chronic headaches can most definitely lead to feelings of depression and helplessness. You may have seen countless doctors and other practitioners with no significant improvements...and therefore resigned yourself to the role of headache victim. *There's nothing more I can do. I'll just have to live this way*, you tell yourself.

Equip Yourself for Lasting Change

It's hard to buy your own statement, though—there's got to be *something* you can do. That's why you are now holding this book.

As a physical therapist practicing in the field of orthopedics, I have been treating headache patients for nearly two decades now, using hands-on techniques, exercises, and patient advice and education. The results have been remarkable. Many headache patients are overmedicated, with less than satisfactory results, all because the actual *cause*

of their headaches was missed. You will find my approach unique because *it targets often unrecognized headache sources, as well as neck-based triggers that can result in tension-type and migraine headaches.*

No Professional Has All the Answers

Each health practitioner can only use the tools that are in his or her own toolbox. Some practitioners have more tools than others. Others haven't updated their toolbox in quite a while. Some practitioners use tools that are less widely known and may even draw skepticism from those who have "never heard of 'em." And some are just better at knowing which tool to use and when to use it. This goes for medical doctors, physical therapists, chiropractors—you name it.

The practical approach in this book will equip you with simple self-help methods of treating your headaches. Further, most of the headache books available on the market today tell you which medications and injections you should take to *ease* your suffering. I want to show you how to *stop* your suffering! I view medication as a last-ditch effort, not a first go-to. My experience and expertise in the treatment of headache causes referred from elsewhere in the body and neck-based migraine triggers will empower you to make lasting changes for yourself. If you find you need to go beyond self-treatment options, you will find advice about exactly what you should look for in a treating practitioner.

This book is not just an information resource about headaches. You are holding the guidebook to wellness in your hands—actual help, hope, and healing for chronic headaches and migraines.

Part 1

Why Won't My Head Stop Hurting?

What Kind of Headache Do I Have Anyway?

The study of the origin and life cycle of headaches has left scientists with more questions than answers. Even with the latest high-tech equipment, researchers still fall short in attempting to explain the start-to-finish process. Doctors still don't know exactly why headaches begin and what causes them to stop once they've begun.

The good news is, we don't need to know exactly how the brain processes your headache in order for you to find some relief. And let's think big, beyond finding relief—and more toward finding a lasting cure! In order for that to occur, what we really need to find out first is what *type* of headache you have. Then we can set off on the road that leads toward your own personal headache-treatment plan. The mission of this chapter is to give you enough information to be making your own headache diagnosis. Basic details of headache types will help lead you in one direction or another. Further into this book you will find detailed descriptions of each headache type and a plan of action that can be taken, both by you and by your health providers.

Becoming a “Headache Student”

Certainly not all headaches are the same, so it is vitally important that your headache condition be properly diagnosed. You need to do your part in becoming a student of your own headaches so you will be able either to diagnose yourself or aid your physician in reaching a correct diagnosis. *Accurate diagnosis is key!* For you to become a good