

What Is the Treatment for Headaches?

The effective treatment of a disease, condition, or pain pattern requires us to first understand the cause of the pain or dysfunction.

Trying to treat a disease or pain pattern when we don't understand the cause will waste a client's time and money. A failed treatment will also prolong the time it takes for the client to get the proper treatment.

Example 1

If someone had a diseased tooth and a horrible toothache, what would happen if we treated them with a beautiful pair of prescription eyeglasses? Of course, the treatment would not work. The toothache will only be resolved if the diseased tooth is addressed.

Example 2

What is the treatment for headaches?

It depends on the cause of the headaches. If it is a brain tumor that's causing the headaches, then the tumor must be removed. If an eye problem that requires corrective lenses is causing the headaches, then glasses are the proper treatment. If the headaches are a result of sulfites in wine, then the headaches can be resolved by eliminating sulfites from the diet. If headaches are a result of hormonal imbalance, hormones must be restored to normal levels.

Likewise, if the headaches are from a myofascial source—muscle, tendon, or ligaments creating a trigger point area—the trigger point must be eliminated to resolve the headaches. The doctor can give pain medication to lessen the pain, but until the cause of the pain is addressed, the problem will likely persist.

Pain Patterns

Any pain pattern—headaches, shoulder pain, neck pain, back pain—can and does have many potential causes.

In the case of a muscle-based pain pattern, our experience shows that up to 80% of all back, neck, shoulder, leg, knee, and foot pain are primarily muscle, tendon, and ligament problems.

A muscle-based problem requires a muscle-based solution, just as a dental problem requires a dental solution or an eye problem requires an optical solution.

Clients deserve to have real solutions that address the cause of their muscle-based pain patterns.

Attempting to solve muscle-based problems by standard medical methods such as pain medication is ineffective because it does nothing to address the source of the problem. Pain pills will not solve the problem any more than glasses will fix a toothache.

The question is this: Who will deliver these myofascial, muscle-based treatments? Certainly not...

- Medical doctors
- Nurses
- Physical therapists
- Acupuncturists
- Often not chiropractors
- Sometimes not even massage therapists

If these health professionals are not addressing the myofascial issues, ***who will?***

Seth Godin asks a question that speaks to this issue facing massage therapists:

What if you stopped?

What would happen to your audience if you shut the doors tomorrow? (I know what would happen to *you*, that's not my question...what would happen to them?)

What would happen to your customers and to your prospects if you stopped doing your work?

If you stopped showing up...would they miss you if you were gone?

If the airline went away, we'd just find another airline. If the cookie cutter politician went away, we'd just vote for someone else. If the typical life insurance agent...

Those are great questions. Would our customers miss us? And who would do the work if we were not there?

The Role of Massage Therapists in Treating Pain Patterns

Massage therapists in general have not embraced the therapeutic possibilities of myofascial work. As professionals, they have opted to give feel-good, luxurious, relaxing sessions instead of the more aggressive and uncomfortable therapeutic-level sessions.

Massage started out as a soothing, relaxing modality, not a therapeutic modality.

Today it is largely seen by the general public as a soothing, pampering modality.

From the 1940s through the 1960s, starting with Ida Rolf, massage and soft tissue work entered the therapeutic realm. From the 1970s on, various massage and bodywork practitioners added to our knowledge of the effectiveness of soft tissue methods as a therapeutic tool.

But in general, massage professionals today have little knowledge of the therapeutic benefits of massage and body work.

Part of the dilemma massage therapists face is that *the general public is often not aware of the effectiveness of massage therapy for treating many of these conditions*. When clients call for an appointment, they are seeking a standard feel-good massage. Many clients have become resigned to the pain patterns they suffer. They often have been told they will need to live with the pain or they will need medication to reduce the pain. They are convinced that nothing will solve their problem.

It would be similar to people suffering from vision problems and optometrists were only trained to fit them with non-prescription sunglasses. Or it would be like people suffering from toothaches and the dentist would only clean their teeth because drilling and filling cavities causes too much pain. How sad it would be if a whole category of healthcare practitioners stopped treating what they identified and treated. It would mean patients with those conditions would not have an option to address and correct the cause of their pain and suffering.

My 33 years and 1.7 million treatments have convinced me that half of all muscular skeletal problems are only effectively treated by a qualified myofascial practitioner—a massage therapist (some chiropractors and physical therapists are trained as well). Massage therapy is the profession that is best equipped to deliver the treatments for these conditions. If they do not treat these myofascial conditions, who will?

To summarize:

- Effective treatment for any condition or pain pattern is a function of the cause.
- If the cause is abnormal muscle activity (trigger points), a myofascial treatment is mandatory.
- Because most of the healthcare world has no knowledge of how to treat these conditions, clients have become resigned to their pain. They have lost hope in finding a real solution to their problems.
- If we don't treat the condition, who will?
- We must train the next generation of myofascial practitioners to address these issues.
- We must educate the public about the effectiveness of myofascial work for many common conditions.

This is the situation we currently have in the massage world. We have a very specific problem with massive amounts of pain, dysfunction, and suffering and literally no one to treat the condition. To complicate the issue, the general public does not know that massage therapy is the best profession to correct these issues.

We know dentists are the only group trained to fix a tooth condition. But the general population doesn't know who to go to for muscle-based problems that, by many estimates, account for half of all doctor visits.