

# Cervicogenic Headaches



## What are cervicogenic headaches?

A cervicogenic headache is a type of headache that **starts in the neck and is ‘referred’ to the head**. This means that the pain does not originate in the head itself, it comes from problems with the neck, such as disorders of the joints, muscles, nerves or discs.

👉 In simple terms: **Your neck is the source, but your head feels the pain.**

## Why do cervicogenic headaches happen?

The upper part of your neck shares nerve connections with areas of your head and face. When structures in the neck become irritated or dysfunctional, your brain can interpret this as head pain.

Common causes include:

- Poor posture
- Prolonged desk use
- Prolonged phone use
- Stiff/restricted neck joints
- Tight neck/shoulder muscles
- Previous neck injuries
- Repetitive strains
- Degenerative changes

## Common symptoms

Cervicogenic headaches often have distinctive features:

### Head Pain

- One side of the head
- Starts at the base of the skull
- May reach temples, forehead or behind eye
- Feels ‘steady’ or dull

### Neck Symptoms

- Neck stiffness/reduced movement
- Pain when turning head
- Tenderness in neck/shoulder muscles

### Other Features

- Headache is triggered by neck movement/posture
- Prolonged sitting/screen time may worsen symptoms

## How can physiotherapy help?

Physiotherapy can play an important role in the assessment and treatment of headaches, particularly as the symptoms are related to muscle tension, joint stiffness, posture, or neck dysfunction.

Physiotherapy treatment may include:

- Joint mobilisation/manual therapies
- Postural correction
- Strengthening deep neck muscles
- Stretching tight structures
- Ergonomic advice
- Targeted exercises to help restore normal neck control and reduce recurrence

**If you experience frequent headaches, neck pain/stiffness or facial tension, book an appointment with our physiotherapy team for a comprehensive assessment and personalised treatment plan.**