



Remember the **80/20 Rule**: 80% of success in healing pain conditions is based on self-care while 20% is based on treatments. Self-care HEALS Headaches with these 5 steps: **Heat/ice/massage**; **Exercise**; **Analgesics**; **Lifestyle**; and **Strain and Stress reduced**. See <https://www.youtube.com/@PainPreventionProgram> for videos of these handouts and Calming Kate relaxation videos.



**Heat, ice & massage:** Apply heat or ice to temples or neck. This will help improve healing, reduce the sensitivity of muscles and encourage healing. *Trigger Point Massage* with a thumb, finger or knobble ([www.pressurepositive.com](http://www.pressurepositive.com)) for a few minutes to provide a deep massage to the tender trigger points within tight muscle bands in neck and temples. This will reduce pain.



**Exercise: Stretching. For the jaw,** gently and gradually increase range of motion by placing two fingers between your front teeth for a count to 5: Rest and repeat 6 times. When 2 fingers are comfortable, then increase to 2 knuckles, then 3 fingers to full range of motion. **For the neck,** turn your head to one side and point your chin to that shoulder. Use your opposite hand to gently pull down the head to stretch your neck. Repeat 6 times per day.



**Balanced relaxed posture. Sitting:** Sit with bottom back against chair then lean back with head up balanced over the neck, and shoulders relaxed back and down. **Standing:** Chest up, head up, balanced over the neck, and shoulders relaxed back and down. Be mindful of maintaining balanced relaxed postures during the day. **Jaw:** Keep your lips closed, teeth apart, tongue up in the “n” position, breath through the nose, and let jaw hang like a hammock between 2 trees. See handout.



**Analgesics:** Use *anti-inflammatory and pain-reducing medications as needed*. Short-term use of over-the-counter ibuprofen, naproxen, acetaminophen, or aspirin (without caffeine) can reduce inflammation, joint, and muscle pain. Consider using a combination of ibuprofen and Tylenol before bedtime to relieve pain with sleep. Avoid opioid medications since it increases pain over time.



**Lifestyle:** *Eat healthy, avoid diet triggers and get a good night's sleep*. Eat a pain-free diet with primarily vegetables, salad, olive oil, nuts, legumes, and seeds. Add chicken, fish, tofu or protein. **Reduce dietary triggers.** Use a headache diary to identify daily activities that trigger a headache and modify your behavior to prevent the headache.



- Sucrose and sugar (desserts, pop, candy)
- Tyramine (wine, beer, alcohol, leftovers)
- Phenylethylamine (aged cheese, herring, chocolate, vinegar, fermented foods, nuts, peanut butter, soy, beans/peas, onions, figs, citrus fruits)
- Nitrites preservative (pork/deli meats/ sausage)
- Tannins (tea, red apples, pears, apple cider)
- Caffeine (coffee, tea, colas, energy drinks)
- Sulfites (dry fruits, processed foods, wines)
- Yeast products (fresh baked bread)
- Additives (Monosodium Glutamate, caseinate)
- Aspartame sweetener (Equal, Nutrasweet, diet pop, candy, sugar-free sweets)
- Glutens (wheat breads, pasta, cereals)



**Improve sleep** by creating a sound sleep environment with a cool, quiet, and dark sleeping room. Avoid caffeine in coffee, tea, and soft drinks. Get a comfortable semi-firm mattress and squishable pillow. Reduce stimulating activities before bed including computer work, video, TV drama, and exercising. Sleep on side or back with pillow between or under knees.



**Strain Reduced:** *Avoid lifestyle triggers and tensing habits that put strain on the jaw and neck muscles*. Use reminders such as stickers or timers and if noticed, replace habits with positive habits

- Smoking and tobacco products
- High altitudes
- Stress, too busy, conflicts
- Over-vigorous exercise or labor
- Shift work hours
- Prolonged negative emotions (shame, sad, anger)
- Teeth clenching and grinding (bruxism)
- Biting cheeks, lips, or tongue
- Jaw strain from musical instruments, snorkel, scuba
- Tensing and strain to jaw or neck muscles



**Stress Reduced:** *Practice calming stress reactions by taking a PAUSE to take a few deep breaths quiet your mind, and practice relaxation*. PAUSE means Pause to Assess, Understand, Start new, and Enjoy the moment. This helps reduce your reactions to stressful life events and decrease tension in the jaw and oral habits such as clenching. See handout.