



Migraine and Tension Headache Treatment; By Dr.M.C.Nelson.D.O.

Headaches are a much suffered, much treated condition, symptoms can vary from person to person and the episodes can vary from episode to episode in the same person. There are several types of headache, Migraine being the most complicated and debilitating, other headaches such as tension headache, sinus headache, or structural complaints of neck and head pain, can be just as debilitating as they occur on a more regular – even daily basis, they wear the patient out with the constant stress of pain and medication. People who suffer these conditions generally think the only treatment available to them is medical or drug based and that natural headache relief is ineffective.

With a little knowledge of how to approach headache treatment structurally people are finding ways to turn off or lessen these episodes. Most therapists look at chemical imbalances and lifestyle modifications like, recognizing the onset or trigger that brings on a headache, using things like hot showers or sleep in a darkened room to turn off or lessen the attack. This article is about the Osteopathic or structural approach to headache treatment, using the Sub Occipital Soother (S.O.S.) to achieve some physical therapy at home and lessen the amount of required treatment, physical and medicinal.

The headache diagnosis divides into Migraine and Tension headache groups, with sub group definitions of these. Migraine is the most complex to treat, being so varied, reactive and debilitating. Tension headaches can be treated in a straight forward structural way, with soft tissue and manipulative treatment programs. Even though both groups are quite different, there is always some degree of structural component that one can latch onto and start to deconstruct the patterns and triggers that help set-up these headaches.

You may not think your back or neck is “out or restricted in movement” as though you need to see the Osteopath or Chiropractor, but the musculature is so spasmed and clamped down, you have a “blinding headache”. Why, does someone who eats chocolate, wake up with an upset stomach and another wake up with a migraine? I feel it is the path of least resistance, and so the person with the tight and restricted structure will wake with the headache and the person with a more reactive digestive system suffers with indigestion.

At first the S.O.S. was used as a self massage and traction device for use at home, in-between treatments, but slowly people started telling me about turning off migraine attacks if they caught them early enough. People were then finding that if they did a bit of regular massage with the S.O.S the attacks would be less intense, shorter in duration and required less medication. Even with basic treatment such as relaxation, the S.O.S. places the neck and head IN a relaxed position, the “traction” the S.O.S. achieves on the sub-occiput (base of the skull), gives support and comfort to the whole cranium. Going through a series of deep breathing exercises while in this position, helps the body drain fluid from the head – venous blood gets backed up if the sub-occiput is tight and restricted. The same for sinus headaches, the traction combined with the breathing has a very noticeable draining effect. The ischemic (lack of arterial blood) headache, is helped as well because the S.O.S. helps normalize blood flow, the founder of Osteopathy, A. T. Still. quoted to say, “The rule of the artery is supreme”.

Once a migraine has set-in it is generally too severe to go anywhere near the cranium with traction etc, the Osteopathic technique of “inhibition” (placing pressure across a muscle to put it on stretch and letting that pressure be continuous until the muscle “lets go”) can be achieved with the S.O.S. Placing it between the shoulders and just sitting back against it in a chair or couch. Muscles all, contract toward their “origin”, pulling ON their “insertion”, while using the S.O.S. as just described, the inhibition technique allows the muscle to ease off, pulling less on their “insertions”.

In the neck, most of the postural muscles have their “origins” in and around the shoulder girdle and their “insertions” in and around the neck and base of the head (sub-occiput). Using the S.O.S. in this “inhibitory” way has great success in taking pressure off the base of the cranium, sometimes this is all a patient needs, to break the cycle and ease the pulling or pressure on their heads, some people need to take medication as well, but often this is noticeably reduced by using the S.O.S.

With this device people can get to understand the role that their structure plays in the symptoms they suffer, they know more about how their structure reacts than most therapists could ever hope to. The amount of soft tissue treatment you can give yourself with the S.O.S. could never be afforded by a therapist, you can take the S.O.S. anywhere with you – work, holiday, Christmas visits with relatives and you DON'T need to power it up. It does NOTHING you do it all.