

## **Yoga Helps Headaches**

Most headaches arise from muscle tension in the back of the neck, due to poor posture. Arteries that feed the brain temporarily narrow reacting to stress created by muscular tension. When the blood vessels narrow and then dilate suddenly, intense pain can occur, causing a headache. So, if you can relax your body's nervous system from day to day, your reactions to stress can be minimized. Therefore, reducing your occurrence or intensity of your headaches.

Most of us slump over computers, laptops, and cell phones daily. Our shoulders end up rounding forward with our heads angled downward. Since the muscles of the neck and upper back connect to the head, tension in the neck can be transferred to the forehead and behind the eyes, causing headaches. So, maintaining a daily stretching routine of your neck and upper back muscles can help diminish the frequency of your headaches.

I personally suffer daily headaches. Practicing yoga helps me tremendously! A good mix of deep calm breathe, stretches, and increased blood flow really help me. Yoga encourages me to breathe deeply, so my blood vessels open up to receive more oxygen. When you stretch in all directions, forward, back, left, and right, you end up in the middle. So, yoga reminds me to "end up in the middle" with good posture. Then, my neck and upper back muscles aren't strained. In addition, when I get stressed out, I remember to take deep breathes and relax my shoulders. Everything is connected. When I am emotionally stressed, my body reacts by tightening up. So, when I feel a headache coming on, I try not to let it escalate by doing the things above.

I practice yoga daily to help alleviate my headaches. My friends know I joke about it by saying, “I only have headaches on Sundays because that is the only day I don’t practice yoga.” Yoga is not a “cure all” for persistent headaches. Eating healthy, drinking lots of water, exercise, and adding more humor in your life is also very beneficial. I also recently noticed that not putting my hair in a ponytail so often relaxes my head too. Overall, try to not let the little things bother you so much, remember to cherish each breath, and laugh a lot. Work hard, but also try to spend good times with family and friends. Striving for a balanced life will also help maintain a relaxed mind and body.