

Treating Tension Headaches with Massage Therapy

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Body Conscious Massage Therapy

Massage

- ▶ Relaxation Massage
- ▶ Therapeutic Massage
 - ▶ Neuromuscular (NMT) and Myofascial therapy
 - ▶ Passive stretching
 - ▶ Homecare
- ▶ Training in the US widely varies
- ▶ Certification/licensing/BCTMB

Migraine vs. Tension Headache

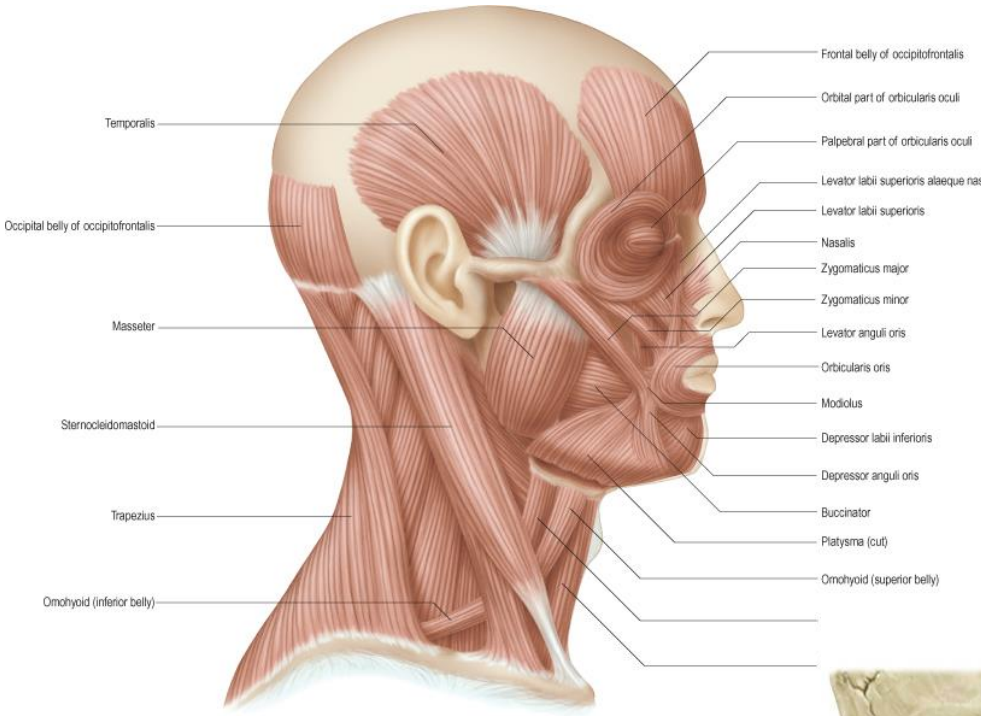
▶ Migraine

- ▶ Only do certain types of bodywork during active migraines such as acupressure, cold therapy, and craniosacral
- ▶ Symptom management with relaxation, myofascial and trigger point work between migraines
- ▶ Many different types of migraines and many different triggers-can be difficult to find the source

▶ Tension

- ▶ Can often find the source (muscles involved)
- ▶ Relaxation, MYO, NMT, passive stretching, homecare
- ▶ Can do bodywork during active headache and often see results immediately
- ▶ Less frequent headaches with regular treatment

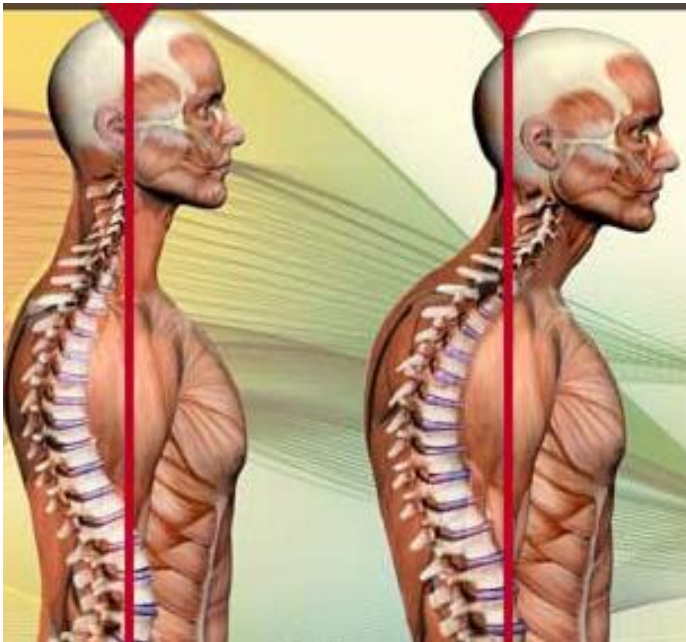
Anatomy Review



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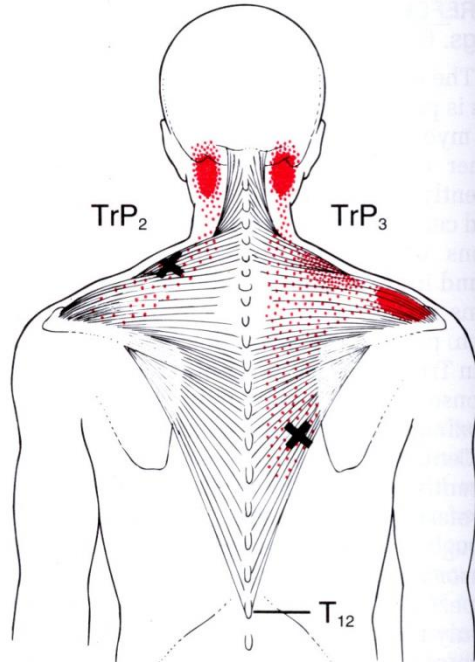
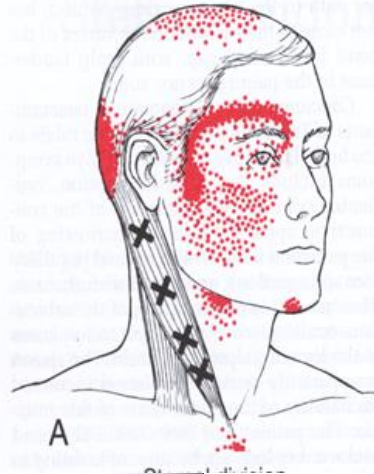
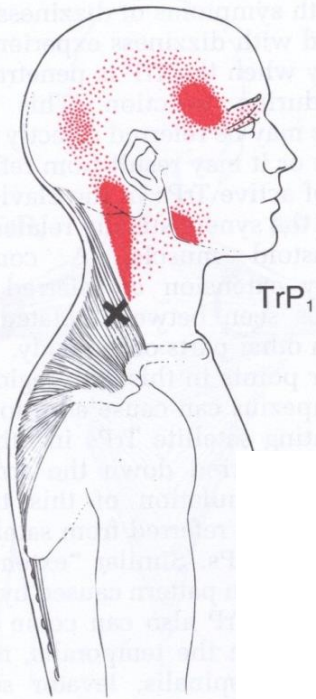


Musculoskeletal Triggers



- ▶ Posture
 - ▶ Weak/tight muscles
- ▶ Tension related to stress and anxiety
- ▶ Injury
- ▶ TMJ dysfunction

Trigger Point Referral Patterns



Trigger point work:

- ▶ What is a trigger point? Adhesions found in fascia or muscle fiber that pinch off free nerve endings and cut off blood supply to that area of the tissue
- ▶ Trigger points can refer pain to different areas of the body
- ▶ There are many ways to treat trigger points
- ▶ Common ways to treat: muscle stripping and friction for tight fibers, holding thumb or finger pressure (easing deeper with their breath and slowly releasing after 60-90 seconds)

Touch Therapy for Beginners:

- ▶ Make sure your hands are sanitized and nails filed
- ▶ Always be gentle, slow and present with your work
- ▶ Make sure you and your client are in a comfortable position for the therapy
- ▶ Always “say hello” to your body by approaching the body with a gentle hold to start
- ▶ Always “say goodbye” to the body with some sort of gentle hold or nerve strokes to end therapy

Common Techniques and Terminology:

- ▶ Stripping: taking fingertips or thumb and sliding along muscle in the direction of muscle fiber (usually done after lotion is applied)
- ▶ Friction: taking fingertips/thumb and pushing along or across muscle fiber or fascia (with shorter and faster movement then stripping)
- ▶ Pincer grasp: Using fingers and thumb to “pinch” an area of muscle or fascia (we usually pincer grasp and hold or “unroll”)
- ▶ Traction: usually done by holding and gently leaning your body away or rocking your body back and forth
- ▶ Trigger point hold: using your thumb or fingertip, sink into tight tissue slowly, hold for 60-90 seconds and then slowly release on their exhalation

Specific Techniques: Head hold



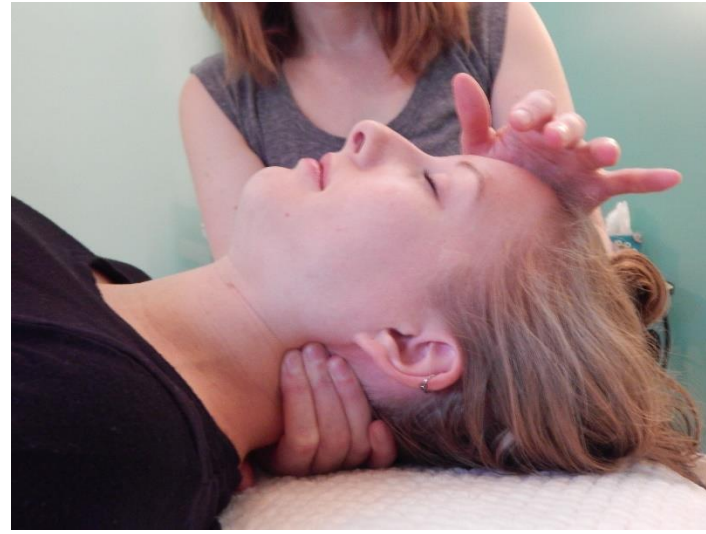
Specific Techniques: Temporalis circles



Specific Techniques: Neck traction



Specific Techniques: Splenius Muscles



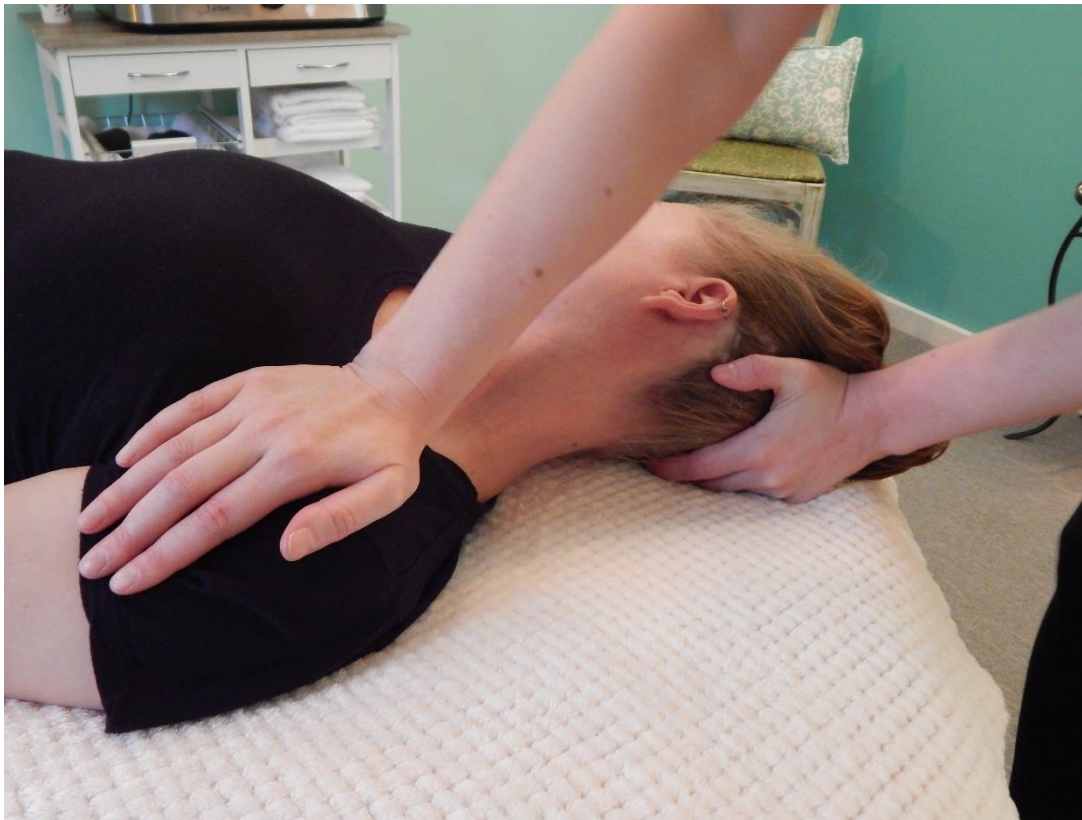
Specific Techniques: Suboccipital muscles



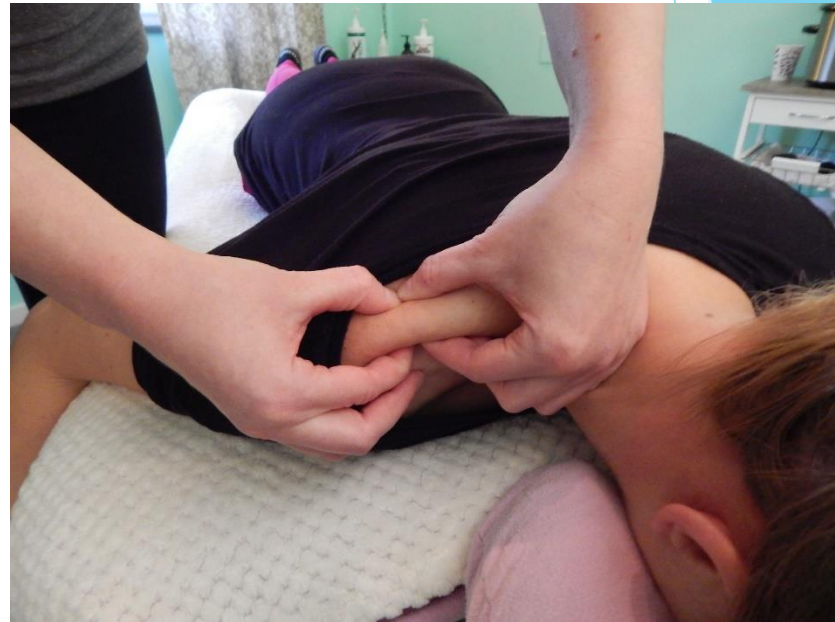
Specific Techniques: Sternocleidomastoid muscle



Specific Techniques: Gentle neck stretch



Specific Techniques: Upper and Middle Trapezius muscle



Conclusion

- ▶ Therapeutic massage can be helpful for tension type headache treatment
- ▶ Migraines are not treated the same as tension headaches and require their own considerations
- ▶ It is important to find board certified (BCTMB) therapists for massage referrals
- ▶ Clarify types of bodywork offered by your local providers

Additional Information:

- ▶ [Migraine & Massage](#) by Gina Rogers, LMT
- ▶ AMTA (American Massage Therapy Association) Massage for Headaches: [AMTA Article on Tension headaches with research links.](#)
- ▶ National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork: <https://www.ncbtmb.org/>

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