

## TREATMENT LENGTH

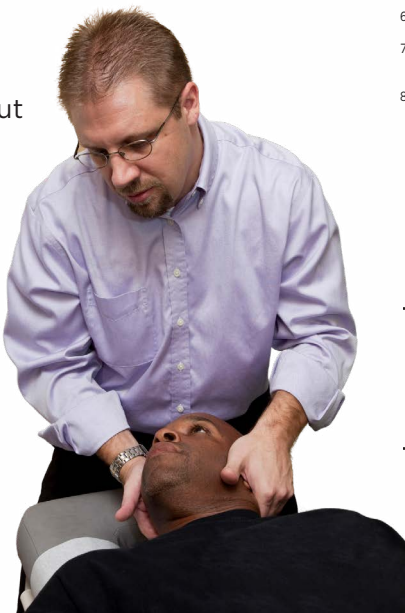
- Treatment plans are individualized.
- Initial treatment may involve 1-3 chiropractic sessions per week for 4-6 weeks.
- After the initial period, Veterans may be re-evaluated.
- If symptoms improve, a “maintenance” program may be recommended to maintain progress.
- Maintenance treatment may be once per month for 6-8 weeks.

## RISKS OF CHIROPRACTIC FOR HEADACHES

Certain conditions increase risk of adverse effects from chiropractic. Ask your Veterans if they have any of the following conditions:

- Fusion of the neck
- Plaques in the carotid artery
- Fear of adjustment in neck due to popping or cracking sounds
- Cardiovascular problems
- Ruptured spinal disc
- Bone weakness

Share information about health conditions with the chiropractor to whom the Veteran is referred.



## CLINICIANS: AIM TO L.E.A.R.N

- L** Listen with empathy to the Veteran’s perception of the problem.
- E** Explain your perspective of the problem.
- A** Acknowledge and discuss the differences and similarities between these perspectives.
- R** Recommend a treatment plan.
- N** Negotiate a mutually agreed-upon treatment plan.

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[rehab.va.gov/chiro/](http://rehab.va.gov/chiro/)

[rehab.va.gov/chiro/locations.asp](http://rehab.va.gov/chiro/locations.asp)

**Additional information on complementary headache management can be found at:**

[mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/complementary-and-alternative-approaches-to-treating-headaches.asp](http://mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/complementary-and-alternative-approaches-to-treating-headaches.asp)

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SC MIRECC Website: [mirecc.va.gov/visn16](http://mirecc.va.gov/visn16)

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# CHIROPRACTIC FOR TREATING HEADACHES



## Clinician Brochure



**VA** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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Headache diagnoses in the military population are similar to the general population:

**21%**

WOMEN

**7%**

MEN

Headaches may be classified as:

- Primary (i.e., benign pain with no underlying pathology).
- Secondary (i.e., pain due to underlying pathological causes that may be harmful).

Veterans experience comorbidities that exacerbate their headaches including:

- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Insomnia

The two most common types of primary headaches are:



## Migraine

- Neurological condition
- Moderate-to-severe pain
- Pulsating/throbbing pain quality
- Nausea and vomiting
- Sensitivity to both light and sound

## Tension-Type Headache (TTH)

- Most common headache disorder
- Mild-to-moderate pain intensity
- Tightening/pressing pain quality

Veterans experience a high incidence of post-traumatic headaches (PTHAs) associated with TBI and loss of consciousness that begin within seven days of head trauma.

- Migraine is most common in Veterans with PTHAs.

Chiropractic is a physical technique based on the diagnosis and mobilization treatment of misalignments of the spine or lack of motion of the joints of the spine.

The chiropractor will often recommend exercise, stretching, and changes in posture. They may also teach relaxation strategies.

Spinal mobilization is used to:

- Improve spinal alignment
- Reduce nerve irritation
- Relax muscle tension
- Improve blood flow

The chiropractor will examine the spine for motion limitations in the joints of the neck.

- Chiropractors may use radiologic imaging to look for spinal misalignments.
- Chiropractors perform joint adjustments where there is a limitation of motion or a spinal misalignment.



## CHIROPRACTIC IMPACTS HEADACHES

- Chiropractic can reduce the number of days with headache for individuals with migraine and tension-type headaches.

## INTERPROFESSIONAL TEAM APPROACHES INCREASE BENEFITS

- Interprofessional approaches informed by the biopsychosocial model offer greater benefit than treatment by a single clinician.
- Collaborate with interprofessional team members to provide care consistent with the Whole Health system of care.

## VETERAN EXPERIENCE

- Some individuals report feeling mild soreness or aching after chiropractic sessions.
- Individuals may hear popping or cracking sounds during joint adjustments.