



22 May 2023

**“New data shows headaches hit 79% of Australian households hard costing the Australian economy over \$35.7 billion annually – with stress the biggest trigger.”**  
**SPINAL HEALTH WEEK 22–28 MAY 2023**

Today, the Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA) launched **Spinal Health Week (22 - 28 May 2023)** with the release of a new survey, **‘The Impact of Headaches in Australia’** revealing the true impact of headaches on the lives of 65% of Australians that costs the Australian economy over \$35.7 billion annually.

Spinal Health Week is Australia’s longest-running national campaign (over 25 years) dedicated to improving the spinal health and wellbeing of all Australians. In 2023, the campaign’s focus is on headaches and what Australians can do to minimise the acute impact headaches have on families, workers and the economy.

More Australians suffer from migraine or tension headaches than diabetes, epilepsy and asthma combined with the survey revealing the most common headache triggers being stress (at home, work and school) and spinal health conditions.

According to the independent survey commissioned by the ACA, **‘The Impact of Headaches in Australia’**, stress is the leading headache trigger for 70% of Australian headache sufferers while 96% of ACA accredited chiropractors surveyed observed stress as the most prevalent headache trigger followed by neck pain.

With more than 7 million Australians suffering tension headaches and 4.9 million suffering chronic migraines, headaches are holding Australians back from living their best life by restricting social activity, concentration and productivity at home and work, resulting in a diminished quality of life for many sufferers.

Dr David Cahill, Chiropractor and President of the ACA said, **“The Impact of Headaches in Australia** survey, shows the disturbing consequences of headaches in the majority (79%) of Australian households.”

The national survey of more than 1000 participants showed 88% of households aged 18-40 years suffer from headaches, 84% of headache sufferers are working-age Australians (18-60 year-olds), while the highest incidences of headaches nationally was in the 31-40 age bracket.

“Alarmingly, Australian headache sufferers cited stress as the leading cause (70%) of headaches, 59% said poor sleep was a contributing factor while 52% reported neck pain as triggers for headache,” said Dr Cahill.

The survey also shows that more Australian women suffer headaches (74%) than men at 54%. Significantly, 59% of female headache sufferers experienced headaches every week. Also more than 71% of headache sufferers reported experiencing spine-related pain.

“Migraine and tension headaches are the most common headache disorders. However, there are many types of headaches and many triggers that cause them. While some may be just a mild inconvenience, others can be severe, chronic and have a debilitating effect on the daily life of sufferers,” Dr Cahill said.

“Headaches relating to spinal health conditions can be cervicogenic (neck related) while tension headaches and migraines can be triggered by stress, neck and spinal problems,” said Dr Cahill.

“While the annual cost of headaches to the Australian economy is in the billions, ACA’s survey has exposed the true cost to headache sufferers as immeasurable when headaches and migraines have a dramatic and debilitating impact on every aspect of their lives,” Dr Cahill said.

“The burden of headaches can rob sufferers of sleep, essential relaxation, social activities, precious time with children, family and friends, and can greatly restrict productivity at home, work and school,” he said.

Of all headache sufferers, 74% said they experienced difficulty concentrating, 70% said they became more irritable, 65% said they lost sleep due to headaches, 59% said they experienced mental exhaustion, 47% experienced physical exhaustion, 41% said headaches impacted their ability to work, and 37% said headaches impacted their ability to perform daily activities.

Of the 514 female respondents, 74% said they suffered headaches, 18% reported their children suffered headaches and 23% said their partner also suffered from headaches.

40% of women said headaches impacted their ability to perform daily activities. 24% reported struggling with depression or anxiety as a consequence of headaches. 23% said headaches impacted their social life. 15% said headaches impacted their ability to engage and play with their children while over 14% said suffering headaches impacted their relationships with family and friends.

The fact that women are more affected by headaches according to the survey was verified in an internal ACA chiropractor survey where 95% reported female patients are the most afflicted by headaches and 62% of chiropractors said many headache patients also present with other spinal health conditions.

Chiropractic healthcare may relieve headaches and migraines in many cases, and may also be able to effectively treat the cause to minimise headache re-occurrence and other spinal health problems which, according to the ACA chiropractor's survey, 66% of chiropractors saw an increase in patients presenting with headaches during the COVID-19 pandemic due to increased stress and neck pain induced by poorly set up workspaces at home.

Of those respondents in the independent survey that said they'd consulted a chiropractor for headaches, 89% reported headache relief with 81% also reporting gaining additional spinal health benefits.

Following chiropractic treatment, 86% of female patients reported relief from headaches. 42% reported their headaches either significantly improved or were totally resolved, and 81% reported gaining additional spinal health benefits including relief from back and neck pain, improvements in mood, sleep, flexibility and energy resulting in improved overall quality of life.

"However, according to the survey, Australians appear to consider headaches to be a '*normal part of everyday life*' and only treat the symptoms with over the counter medications rather than seek professional, drug-free healthcare to identify and treat the cause which can often be spine-related," Dr Cahill said.

"What we found troubling is that over 50% of headache sufferers only treated the symptoms by popping a pill rather than consulting a chiropractor to relieve headaches and limit re-occurrence by treating the cause rather than masking an often treatable spinal health condition," he said.

While medication has a role to play in managing some headaches, all medication should be considered in light of potential side effects that is not without risk, including the commonly used painkiller, paracetamol.

With the recent decision of the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) to reduce the maximum size of paracetamol product packs due to the marked increase of paracetamol poisoning cases and toxic liver diseases caused by paracetamol overdose; consulting a chiropractor for drug-free treatment of headaches is a far healthier option and the leading treatment of choice among many headache sufferers.

ACA accredited chiropractors are Australia's leaders in providing proven relaxation methods and drug-free holistic healthcare that treats the underlying causes of headaches and not just the symptoms.

People experiencing headaches can download ACA's free **Headache Fact Sheet** from [consultachiro.org.au](http://consultachiro.org.au) and for drug-free pain relief, headache sufferers should consult an ACA accredited chiropractor who can provide quality chiropractic healthcare encompassing stress management, good posture, regular exercise, rest and a healthy diet to promote overall health and wellbeing.

During national **Spinal Health Week 2023**, the ACA is tackling spine related headaches 'head on' by increasing awareness of the painful condition and improving spinal health through effective, non-invasive, drug-free treatments to limit the impact of headaches on the quality of life of over 13 million Australians.

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[spinalhealthweek.org.au](http://spinalhealthweek.org.au) | [consultachiro.org.au](http://consultachiro.org.au)

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