

Migraine and the Neck

The nerves that supply the back of the neck and upper back originate in the area of the brain that is responsible for generating the migraine attack (B in Figure 1). As these areas of the brain overlap, one system will interfere with the other in a complex manner. Activation of the migraine centre leads to pain in the neck, pain in the neck leads to activation of the migraine centre (see Figure 1).

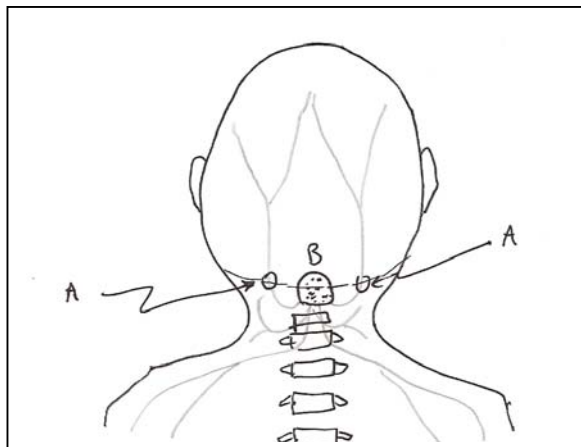


Figure 1 – Nerves supplying the back of the head, neck and shoulders originate in the area of the brain that is responsible for migraine

There are two things you can do to break this cycle:

1. Locate any “trigger spots” – areas in the back of your neck or upper back that are particularly tender. A particularly important spot that is tender in many migraine sufferers is along the ridge at the base of the skull either side of the spine (A in Figure 1). Three times a day lie quietly with the head supported with one pillow and massage these spots quite firmly for 30 seconds.
2. Loosen up any tightness in the neck. Figure 2 shows four exercises you can do. Repeat each of these 5 times and do this 3 times a day.

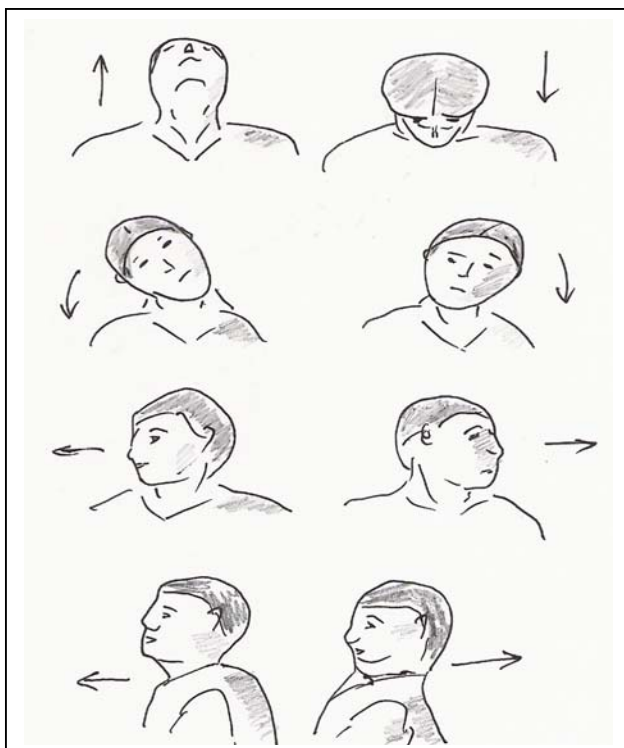


Figure 2 – Neck exercise that can be helpful