

# MIGRAINE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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## **How to make exams less painful for students**

Headaches have become an ordinary occurrence for students around exam times and many of them feel helpless when dealing with this problem. Students are so overwhelmed by the pressure of assignments and exams that they completely forget about the effects this is having on their health. Dr Shevel the Chairman of the South African division of the International Headache Society has the following advice for students:

- Dietary headache is a common affliction for students. These are usually triggered by foods that assist with energy such as caffeine and chocolate. Take note of which foods trigger headaches for you by keeping a diary and avoid these foods. A Dietary Trigger Diary is available at free of charge to assist you. Remember that skipping meals is a surefire trigger for headaches. Eat in moderation and enjoy your meals.
- Be aware of your posture when studying as this can result in a tension headache. Use a good chair that supports your back and that gives the ideal posture. Visit [www.headacheclinic.co.za](http://www.headacheclinic.co.za) to get a free copy of the Ideal Computer Posture.
- Learn the right stretching exercises to stretch the muscles of your head, face, neck and jaw. Stretching should be gentle and soothing, not agonizingly painful. Stretch your neck and jaw muscles carefully and you will get results.
- Beware of Medication Overuse Headache. Medication is only appropriate for someone who suffers a few times a month. According to the International Headache Society, if you are taking headache medication more than twice a week you are at risk of developing Medication Overuse Headache. This

means that the drugs you are taking will cause the headache or migraine to become more severe and more frequent over time. This leads to a downward spiral into constant medication use and constant pain. The more medication you take, the more pain you are in, the more medication you need, and the cycle continues.

- It is important that you keep your stress levels to a minimum. Plan ahead to guarantee that you have enough time to study and that you get sufficient rest each night. One should also take regular breaks to ensure that you don't get overworked.

“If the problem persists, it is imperative that you get an accurate diagnosis” added Dr Shevel. There are a number of treatment options that can be investigated. The longer the headache persists, the more damage will be done. Dr. Shevel suggests getting to the bottom of the problem and resolving the pain permanently.

For further details on the study please contact [Mary-lee Cantor on +27 11 484 0933](#)

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