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Devastating Headaches Found After Motor Vehicle Collision

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), auto accidents cause most brain injuries in the United States. Individuals who have been involved in a motor vehicle collision (MVC), and are hurting from headaches may be experiencing a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

TBI is a severe blow or jolt to the head causing a disturbance in major functions of the brain. MVC victims who have suffered from trauma to the head during auto accidents often experience long term medical and cognitive issues. A headache is the most common symptom of damage TBI.

Headaches frequently occur after an MVC. Some MVC victims start getting headaches immediately after the collision, others may not get them until after a few days, weeks, or months. Individuals experience headaches of varying character, onset, duration and location.

Headaches can cause a significant health burden with direct impact on the quality of life of MVC victims, altering their relationships, work attendance and efficiency, and their capacity to plan for their future. The International Headache Society (IHS) categorizes headaches into primary and secondary.

Primary headaches are diagnosed and treated conservatively. Secondary require immediate intervention. Such headaches often have a more immediate threat of mortality or higher morbidity. Post-traumatic headaches resulting from MVCs are secondary headaches that can be caused by factors such as an acceleration/deceleration injury, and that often occur with other whiplash-related symptomatology.

There are numerous reasons why headaches may arise after an injury. Sometimes the source is not always obvious and can continue for months or years for no distinct medical reason. The assessment of a MVC claim, and particularly one based on headaches, can be difficult to determine. There are several factors involved.

The consequences of the MVC may include all medical expenses ensuing from the collision, loss of income subsequent from the headaches, pain and suffering caused by injuries, and loss of enjoyment of life. Headaches will wear the MVC victim down mentally and emotionally.

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Severe and chronic headaches following MVCs can be a symptom of Post Traumatic Headache Disorder (PTHD). There are several different types of headaches following mild to moderate trauma sustained to the head.

Post-Traumatic Headaches - caused by trauma to the head and neck during an MVC.

Symptoms appear after a few days or weeks have passed. Nerves located in the tissues and bones of the neck, have branches that travel to the skull and scalp, and can result in headaches. This type of headache usually has these features:

- start in neck, shoulders and back of the head
- travel over the top of the head
- neck movement or positioning makes the pain worse
- usually associated with nausea
- range from mild to severe

Post-Concussive Headaches or Migraines - caused by an area of the brain becoming hypersensitive, trigger a pain signal that spreads out to other parts of the. Often associated with concussions, tend to come hand in hand with nausea, vomiting and light sensitivity. If the migraine is bad enough the symptoms can include confusion, dizziness, memory loss and even more severe symptoms. These headaches typically have the following features:

- dull, throbbing sensation, usually on one side of the head
- nausea and vomiting
- light and sound sensitivities
- pain level rated as moderate to severe
- might get a warning signal, such as seeing spots or bright lights. This is called an *aura*.

Muscle-Contraction/Spasm Headaches - Injured muscles in the upper back or neck are a common cause of post-MVC headaches, associated with muscle tension or muscle spasms and stress. Reduced range of motion (ROM), stiffness, and swelling are common symptoms as well. They usually have the following features:

- tight, squeezing sensation, often around the entire head or on both sides
- pain level rated as mild to moderate
- occur later in the day

Whiplash Headaches - Whiplash is where your head is violently thrust too far forward or backward and often results in soft tissue injury. The resulting headaches of whiplash are often located near the base of the skull, and may be accompanied by neck pain or stiffness, and fatigue.