

# Treatment aimed at the source of pain

A Melbourne clinic offers an alternative treatment for the symptoms of migraines.

Faye Sampimon was pregnant with her second child six years ago when “out of nowhere” she was struck down with severe pain.

Her headaches were so intense the 39-year-old Melbourne woman vomited and passed out, and it would take a day or two to recover from each debilitating episode.

Sampimon immediately went to her GP to investigate the cause of the pain. A battery of tests – MRI, CT scans, and bloodwork – were ordered, and all of them came back clear.

She had no history of even mild headaches, so her doctor thought these migraines might have been triggered by her habit of grinding her teeth in her sleep.

“That was plausible,” says Sampimon, who says she is a “teeth grinder”. She resigned herself to managing the migraines through a combination of massage, chiropractic treatment and acupuncture.

But back at work as a recruiter for Victoria Police, where she was frequently on the road visiting police stations, she often found herself pulling over when a migraine hit.

“There was short-term relief, but I needed something else, so my doctor put me on a drug to stop the pain. It worked for a period of time, but I was taking too many of them.”

So many, in fact, that she became immune to their effectiveness.

“I’d have migraines every three days, and



Faye Sampimon receives treatment from Roger O'Toole at the Melbourne Headache Centre.

they'd put me out for a whole day, sometimes two.”

The pain was so “horrific” that she had to take leave from work and she didn't want to live the rest of her life on drugs.

Looking for a way of treating the cause of the pain, she found the Melbourne Headache Centre in early April this year where she attended an initial assessment and four more sessions over the following month.

Roger O'Toole, a physiotherapist and director of the Melbourne Headache Centre,

says the technique used, known as the Watson Headache Approach, is aimed at treating the cause of migraines and helps practitioners to precisely assess and treat small faults in the top of the neck.

These faults feed directly into the trigeminocervical complex, or TCC, known to be constantly overactive in headache and migraine, he says. Like a powder keg, the TCC sits buzzing away, waiting for a trigger to “blow it up”.

“Even if your neck isn't sore, this

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- Roger O'Toole

technique allows us to calm and quieten the TCC,” says O'Toole.

“So, whether the trigger is stress, hormones, dietary or poor sleep, it can be very effective.

“During the assessment, we can detect whether or not the neck is involved, and we only treat if we can see clearly that the neck is involved.

“If it is, we expect to see significant changes within the first two weeks, with the total number of treatments usually around seven to eight before discharge with self-management,” O'Toole says.

“Once people have been cleared of serious causes and have medication to alleviate symptoms, this technique is an important next step in their journey.

“It's such a gift to provide this technique to sufferers like Faye and to be a part of their journey and help them gain control back in their lives.”

To find out if this approach is suitable for you call 8648 6487 or fill out the online assessment at [melbourneheadachecentre.com.au](http://melbourneheadachecentre.com.au). “Take control of your symptoms today”.