

## **One way to diagnose chronic stress from an irritated 10<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve**

By Stanley Rosenberg

There are many health problems – physical, emotional and mental – that might be caused by an irritation the 10<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve.

This nerve can be brought into a state of dysfunction by mechanical irritation at two critical places. The nerves pass through the membrane covering the jugular foramen, a small opening in joint between the temporal and occipital bones. Problems can also arise from misalignment between the base of the skull and the first vertebra of the neck, i.e, the atlanto-occipital joint.

Restoring function to the 10<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve is possible, but requires a properly trained, skilled therapist.

### **The function of the 10<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve (the *vagal nerve*)**

This nerve has several different physiological functions. Generally, the vagal nerve is responsible for bringing about changes to the viscera, which we associate with the *relaxation response*. If there is dysfunction of this nerve, the physiology of the client is locked into a *stress response*.

In addition to this function of relaxation, the 10<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve is also a motor nerve for several muscles at the back of the mouth and in the throat. One of these muscles, the *levator palatine velli* is visible in most people and can be used as a guide to determine if there is proper function of the 10<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve.

### **Chronic Stress is a widespread problem**

Most likely, the cause of the problem in children is misalignment of the bones of the skull and neck from mechanical stresses from the birth process.

The number of people with chronic stress increases as people grow older. By the time people are 60, 1 out of 3 people are suffering from chronic stress from physical, mechanical causes.

This increase from childhood is due to the various traumas that we receive as well as the effect of worsening posture with aging. For example, many whiplash injuries result in *post-traumatic stress*.

Stress is one of the multiple cluster of factors causing heart disease, cancer, diabetes, asthma, allergy, weakened immune defense system, etc. I am sure that in the group of people with serious illness, or most frequently seeking help from medical practitioners, the percentage suffering from chronic stress is even higher than a cross-section of the population.

### **Chronic stress is a cause of many physical, emotional and mental problems**

Here is a list of stress related symptoms. You can see that the list includes physical, emotional and mental symptoms.

Sore neck and shoulder	Dizziness	Headache (tension and migraine)
Muscles	Excessive daydreaming and fantasising	Irregular heart beat
Allergy	Excessive use of medicine with or without prescription	Heartburn
Anger	Excessive or unreasonable distrust of friends/colleagues	Haemorrhoids
Arthritis	Uncalled for sweating	High blood pressure
Asthma	Difficulty concentrating	Difficulty sleeping
Pains in the chest	Difficulty remembering	Irritability
Tightly clenched teeth	Many worries	Loss of appetite
Cold hands and feet	Feelings of fear	Loss of interest for sex
Influenza	Feeling "down"	Back pain
Irritation of the large intestine	Feeling of hopelessness	Minor infections
Constipation	Feeling of a lack of energy or heaviness	Clump in the throat
Extended periods of depression	Lack of interest in everything	Menstruation pains
Eye or facial tensions	Feeling of being tense after exertion	Forgetfulness
Hyperventilation	General anxiety	Nervous
Increase in drinking or smoking habits	Frequent accidents or injuries	Nightmares
Poor Digestion	Frustration	Excessive eating
Tendency to start to cry	Grinding teeth at night	Ulcer
Depression		Restless
Diarrhoea		Shortness of Breath
Difficulty to agree		Skin problems
Difficulty to make a decision		Stomach problems
		Tense / hard muscles

Often these problems are considered as separate issues.

Constipation is usually considered as a problem of the large intestine. But constipation might just as well be a problem with the irritation of the nerve controlling the function of the large intestine.

Being unable to sleep at night because of worry is usually considered as a psychological issue.

Inability to concentrate might be thought of as a lack of intellectual ability or as a sign of aging.

In fact, these seemingly unrelated health issues might all be coming from one and the same source: stress.

**Here is a precise, quick way to determine if a client has chronic stress arising from muscular-skeletal problems, caused by irritation of the 10<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve.**

All it takes to test a client for chronic stress from physical causes is a small flashlight and 15 seconds.

### **Benefits of testing**

If this test shows that they are suffering from chronic stress, it can indicate the importance of finding the source of the stress and treating that, rather than looking for ways to treat the individual symptoms.

In therapy responses of a chronically stressed client will most likely deviate from what you expect in terms of achieving successful outcomes. Their ability to make progress with you might be limited in ways that they themselves cannot control. There is a strong possibility that you will be unable to elicit the response that you want verbally, until the dysfunction has been addressed physically.

You will probably find that most of your “difficult” clients are suffering from chronic stress.

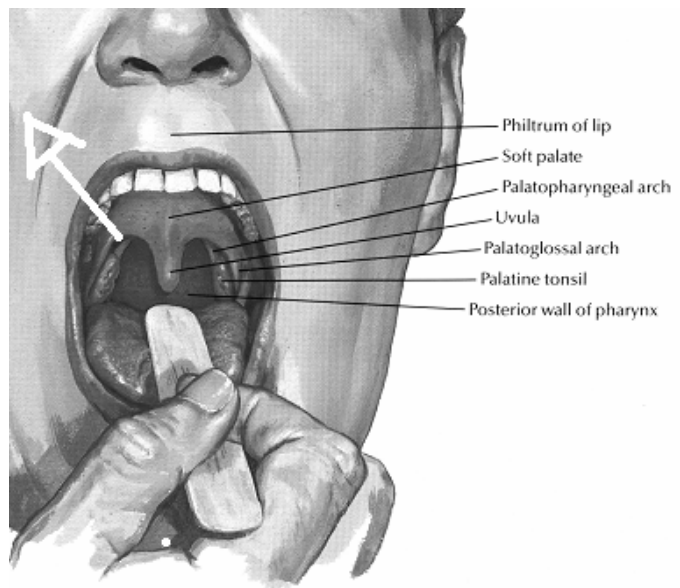
### **How to test**

Ask your client to open their mouth as widely as is comfortable, so that you can see the back of their soft palate. (The soft palate is the back of the roof of the mouth.) It is helpful to use a small flashlight to allow you to see the back of their throat. Ask them to say, “Ahhhhhhhhhhhh.”

(If your client has a hard time opening their mouth wide enough for you to see, you might ask them to start to open their jaw by pushing it forward first and then opening it afterwards.)

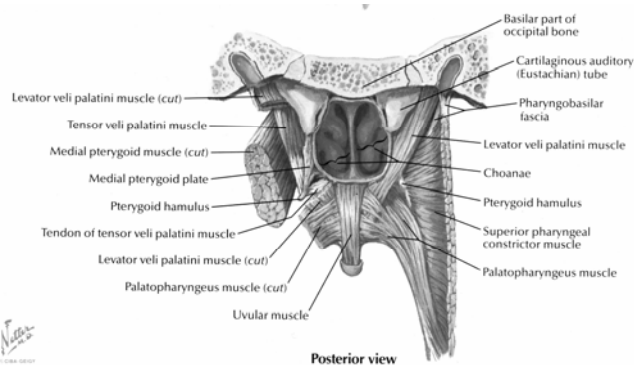
If there is normal function of the 10<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve, then that part of the soft palate, which is furthest to the back, will lift up on both sides when the person says "Ahhhhhhhhhhhh".

If there is an impulse on only one side, that side will lift up higher and distinctly. It may draw the other side partly up, but there is a noticeable difference between the side with the impulse and the side being dragged along.



A lack of clear impulse on one side indicates dysfunction of the 10<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve on that side which does not come up. The cause is most likely irritation of the nerve where it exits the base of the skull through an opening, which is called the **jugular foramen**.

This is because the muscle, **levator veli palatine** which lifts the soft palate at the back of the throat is enervated by the motor fibers of the 10<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve. If the nerve is not working, the impulses do not reach the muscle and there is no lift when the person says "aaaaaah."



## Correction

To correct irritation of the 10<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve usually takes a skilled cranial osteopath, a cranio-sacral therapist, physical therapist, or a chiropractor trained in Sacro-Occipital Technique. It is important to evaluate the skill level of the practitioner you use in terms their ability to restore proper function of the 10<sup>th</sup> cranial nerve, which you can see the next time you look at your client's soft palate.

Many practitioners of the various therapies might consider themselves as skilled, but may not be able to do the job that you require. The better the practitioner, the less time it will take to bring about the desired changes.