

Orthopaedic Connection

Pain in the Neck

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Did you think it was an article about your least favorite relative? Any of us could write about that but no, this is about an actual physical problem.

It is a common complaint among patients, but there are many possible causes, some of them serious.

Causes

- Neck muscles especially in the back of the neck become strained with too many hours over a computer or driving. If overuse occurs often, it can cause chronic neck pain.
- Arthritis can occur in the little facet joints in the back of the neck and can lead to pain and stiffness.
- Disc trouble occurs when the spongy cushions between the neck bones (vertebrae) become stiff and provide less shock absorption. It's part of the normal aging process in the neck and upper back.
- Herniated discs or bone spurs from around the facet joints and can irritate nearby nerves causing additional pain in the shoulder or arm.
- Whiplash can stretch neck muscles and ligaments. It can also damage discs and facet joints.

Self Care

Neck pain related to over use and strains can respond to home care in a few days. Save yourself some time and money. Try the following before seeking medical help.

- Try the old standbys like Theragesic or BenGay to rub on your neck
- Tylenol for pure pain relief
- Advil, Aspirin or similar can provide pain relief and anti-inflammatory relief at the same time
- Heat for 10 - 15 minutes followed by an ice pack for 10 - 15 minutes are often suggested by physical therapists.
- Rest your neck. Your head is heavy for a sore neck to support. Lie down for short periods of 10 - 20 minutes during the day if you can.
- Massaging neck muscles helps

- Gentle stretching. Try slowly rotating your head from side to side keeping your chin level. Do 5 - 10 reps. Tilt your head slowly to one side until you feel stretching of the muscles on the opposite side. Then do the same motion for the other side of the neck. Do 5 - 10 reps. Slowly circle your head like the hands of a clock.

Key Point: If self care doesn't result in neck pain lessening within a week or two you need medical help.

Please come back next week to learn what that might include.

Please remember that information about all the Orthopaedic Surgery and musculoskeletal problems I treat in the office and hospital can be found by logging onto www.orthopodsurgeon.com our office teaching website. This can take you to Your Orthopaedic Connection for even more great information. Check us out.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush