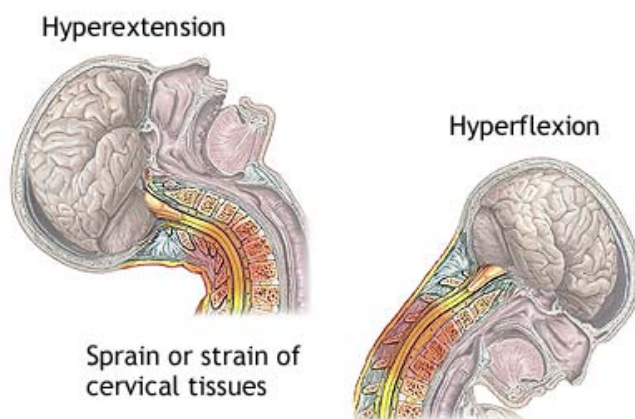


“WHIPLASH AND NECK PAIN”

Whiplash Associated Disorders (WAD) - What is it?

An injury to the neck (the cervical vertebrae) resulting from rapid movement of the head and neck usually acceleration or deceleration (as in an automobile accident, diving accident or any other forceful injury.)



ADAM.

Structures Injured

The high velocity load transmitted through the neck can affect, ligaments, muscle, nerves cervical disc, joints, and bone. The amount of damage is dependant on many factors such as, age, speed of impact, direction of impact and neck position at time of accident.

Pain and Whiplash

Many people will not experience any pain or injury following a whiplash injury. In people who do, the pain can occur immediately after the accident, but it is also common for symptoms to be delayed for days, weeks, or even months. One of the reasons for this, is that certain structures take time to develop into painful tissues, you should not be alarmed if initially you feel fine but later develop some of the symptoms associated with whiplash, as outlined below.

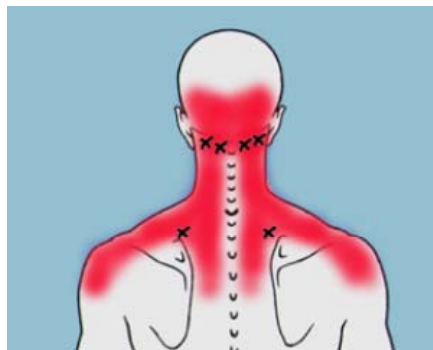
Common Symptoms

The common symptoms of whiplash are, neck pain, shoulder pain, headaches, arm and hand pain. Individuals most commonly describe a constant ache and stiffness in the neck and between the shoulder blades. However the pain may radiate down the arm and hand in a shooting manner, occasionally giving sensations such as pins and needles, numbness or even weakness. Many

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people recover from a whiplash injury within days or weeks however some symptoms may take several weeks, months or even a couple of years to show improvement. It should be highlighted that the severity of pain does not always correlate with the extent of actual damage in the structures. Often radiological findings such as X-rays and MRI's are clear but the individual may still be experiencing pain. Other symptoms can include dizziness, visual disturbances, balance problems, concentration deficits, nausea, and light-headedness.



Management and recovery

As already mentioned an individual's recovery from whiplash is dependant on many factors and no two injuries are the same. This means that the approach to management of whiplash varies for each individual. However the one factor which is common in all cases is that the individual can really help in the self management of their condition. Trying to return to normal everyday activities is important in trying to speed up the recovery process. Many people are often apprehensive that by doing this they will make their condition worse. In most cases all that is needed is some guidance and modification of activities to ensure that excess load is not placed on the painful structures. This is an area which a physiotherapist can give lots of advice on. Keeping as active as possible in the early stages after whiplash is important, at the same time though, it is important not to place your neck under any undue stress which may exacerbate the symptoms of whiplash.

Practical tips

One of the most important aspects in managing your pain following whiplash is to be aware of your posture throughout the day. For further information on this please read the article titled 'Posture and Ergonomics'. This provides practical tips for setting up your workplace and correcting your posture. It is also important to perform some exercises to your neck to improve both the stability and strength of certain muscles whilst maintaining good range of movement. The neck is like any other joint in the body; once it has been injured it needs appropriate exercises to aid its recovery. If an individual sprains their knee or ankle, certain muscles lose their optimal function, and exactly the same happens in the neck. These muscles do not automatically recover and require specific training. Again this is something a physiotherapist would be able to advise you on.

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Physiotherapy

Seeking early physiotherapy advice can help prevent further damage and persistent pain. Treatment usually consists of advice and education, mobilisations, postural education, and strengthening exercises to reduce pain and restore normal function.

Warning Signs

It is also important to bear in mind that whiplash can cause severe damage. These injuries will probably be picked up in A&E if the individual goes to hospital. However the list below is some signs or symptoms which should alert you to seeking early professional advice.

- Constant unremitting pain which is not alleviated by anything.
- Severe night pain.
- Inability to move the neck at all and difficulty lifting the head from a lying down position.
- Unable to support the head with the use of hand or head rest.
- Weakness and deteriorating function in the arms, hands or legs.
- Pins and needles, numbness or tingling in both arms and legs.
- Problems with double vision, speech, swallowing, fainting, and persisting nausea and/or vomiting.

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References available on request

For more advice on whiplash, neck pain or any other medical treatment please contact us on **0870 2000 878** or info@puresportsmed.com

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