Neck Pain

Anatomy of the Neck

Your neck is made of seven bones called cervical vertebrae. Between the vertebrae are discs, which provide a cushion. Also, between each vertebra a nerve exits from your spinal cord.

These nerves extend into your arms giving you sensations like hot, cold, and pain as well as allowing you to move your arm muscles.

Neck Movement

- When you move your head forward, it is called flexion.
- When you move your head backwards, it is called extension.

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- When you move your head to the side, it is called **side bending**.

- When you move to look over your shoulder, it is called **rotation**.

**What causes neck pain?**

- **Muscle tightness** can occur from poor posture and stress

- **Injuries to the neck** can create **radiating** pain which is felt in the head, shoulders, arms, and hands.
• **Disc degeneration** is when the discs lose water and become shorter, causing the vertebrae to be closer together. Bony spurs can develop, causing pain and irritation to the nerve.

![Disc degeneration diagram]

• **Arthritis** is when the bone surfaces become rough, which can cause irritation to the disc and nerve as well.

![Arthritis diagram]

• **Herniated disc** is when disc material ruptures and presses on a nerve, increasing pressure on the nerve.

![Herniated disc diagram]
- **Sports and industrial accidents** account for a large number of injuries.

- **Whiplash** is caused by a quick forward or backward motion of the head resulting in the ligaments, tendons, or muscles stretching beyond their normal limits. This movement is typical in car accidents.

**Be Kind to Your Neck**

- **Sitting**
  
  Keep your chin tucked while you are sitting. Use a chair with back and arm supports.

- **Standing**
  
  Keep your chin tucked and your low back in a natural position.
• **Sleeping**
  Keep your neck in a midline position. Avoid sleeping on your stomach.

• **Driving**
  Sit with the seat upright and close enough to the wheel and controls that you do not need to reach forward. Adjust your headrest to the height of your head.

• **Lifting and Bending**
  Bend your knees to lift, not your back. Keep the load close to you and avoid reaching for any length of time. Avoid fast movements.

• **Working**
  Take frequent breaks and change activities often.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.