
PAIN IN THE NECK



The holidays are over. Back to the desk. Schools are soon at full speed.

Why is my neck hurting again?

The vast majority of neck pain is activity related. The things we do, how we work, often sitting most of the day, sitting at school, sleep posture etc. impact how much strain we put on our necks.

Tech Neck

We are beginning to see a lot of “Tech Neck”. That is neck pain related to our posture, when we use technology, particularly smartphones, iPads, tablets etc.

Typically, this happens when looking down with a flexed neck and holding a phone. The muscles in the neck are meant to support the head and move the head and neck. The neck muscles work harder and fatigue faster when they also have to brace and support an arm holding a device for extended periods of time.

The iPhone was born on 29th June 2009, which all things considered, is really not that long ago. In many respects we are still learning how to live with and use smart phones, and more importantly feel their impact on our bodies and health.

2024 will see 7 billion smart phones and 17 billion mobile devices all up! That means that we all have and use at least one device each. It's hard imagining life without them

Neck pain may be more serious:

- After trauma such as a motor vehicle accident
- Head clash
- After a seizure or fainting
- With a sudden sharp headache
- If you have trouble swallowing
- You have fever or are feeling unwell

It is concerning that children with undeveloped spinal curves spend so much time on devices. We can already see lasting effects of this use.

Sleep & Neck Pain

Sleeping well and waking up rested and comfortable, largely rules out sleep as a factor causing neck pain.

Of course many of us don't sleep so well. Sleeping on the front requires the neck to twist so that we can breathe. Falling asleep in front of the TV is not much better. Draft from aircon or fans, particularly during this hot summer, can make the muscles contract on one side and hence you wake up with a stiff and sore neck.



Cold or Heat?

An ice pack applied for a maximum of 10 minutes every 1-2 hours can relieve acute, sudden pain. Cold can limit swelling and reduce inflammation.

After 24 hours a heat pack, hot water bottle or hot shower typically relieves the pain better by increasing blood circulation to the area.

Disclaimer! Best to ask a qualified Health Care Professional first.

Muscle, Joint or Nerve?

Neck pain can stem from all three areas and severe neck pain very often involves all three tissues. Together we can work out which area in particular to address in order to bring about relief.

“My neck hurts so much it makes me feel sick”

Neck pain and neck stiffness can make most activities feel quite miserable. This can lead to a sensation of feeling unwell.

Nociception, or pain from tissue damage and inflammation is part of this feeling, but loss of proprioception (our position in space) too, is a part of feeling uncomfortable.

The joints and muscles of the neck are rich in proprioceptive nerve receptors. When neck movements hurt, we tend to move less in an attempt to reduce pain, hence the brain loses feedback of where we are in space.

Restored neck movement is key to overcoming a pain in the neck.

Prevent Neck Pain:

- Practice good posture
- Support arm holding phone on desk or arm rest
- Mix sit/stand/walking
- Sleep on side or back
- Use a comfy pillow
- Engage posterior chain in workouts
- Breathe deeply using your diaphragm
- Listen to your body
- Have Chiro checkups regularly, before permanent damage is caused