

Crellin Chiropractic Pain and Injury Center

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Instructions for those with neck pain

Neck and upper back pain are almost as common as low back pain and every bit as aggravating. Whether it's from a motor vehicle accident or you woke up with muscle spasms after a rough night's sleep, it can be miserable. It is important to not do those things that can aggravate the condition and prolong your recovery.

Avoid looking up or down for an extended period of time. Reading, knitting, cooking, working at a bench, using a laptop or using your cell phone are all activities that can irritate the inflamed and injured tissues. In addition, sitting in a slumped position with no lower back support places your head out over your body causing increased work and stress on your muscles that hold your head erect.

Sleeping on your stomach is a big no-no for both neck and back problems. As you turn your head to breathe when you are on your stomach, you are placing a great deal of tension on the injured tissues and not allowing them to heal and rest. You might discover this little phenomenon on your own, but some of us are stubborn. If you are in acute pain, do not do anything to provoke the pain further if you can help it. Stay comfortable and don't put yourself in a position where you can't get comfortable. For example don't commit to an athletic event where you will be sitting on bleachers for 4 hrs with no back support.

Now, some of the things you can do include using ice regularly. Injury causes inflammation, inflammation causes fibrosis, fibrosis causes scar tissue, and scar tissue leads to chronic pain. Ice decreases inflammation. ICE IS GOOD! Always put a thin barrier between your body and the ice, such as a pillow case. You can use a soft ice pack, frozen vegetables, or even a Ziploc bag of ice cubes, they all work. After 48 hrs you can consider heat as all the active inflammation happens within 48 hrs of injury. If you are feeling ambitious, you can alternate 10 minutes of heat, followed by ten minutes of ice and then repeat. Always end with the ice. This is called contrast therapy and can be quite helpful.

Pillows are a big deal when your neck is hurting. You can "doctor" your own pillow if your current pillow does not seem to be supporting your neck. Roll up a towel and place it on top of the pillow and under your neck if you are on your side or your back. This should give you some extra support. We have "water pillows" for sale here at the office. We personally think they are amazing, but only recommend them if you don't already own a pillow that you absolutely love.

Don't drive yourself crazy reading things on the internet or listening to your friends and family about what they did for their back pain and how well it worked. Every person and every episode is different. What works for one person may not work for someone else. I have been in this profession for over 30 years and have picked up a couple of things along the way. I will do my best to answer all the questions you have to the best of my ability.

In conclusion, neck pain is awful making it hard to drive, sleep, work, and fulfill your daily duties and activities. Neck pain can often lead to headaches which are a whole different problem. Taking care of yourself outside of the office is as important as the treatment you receive in the office. Following instructions and advice given by your doctor will hasten your recovery.

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