



Neck injury (neck sprain)

Neck Sprain

Neck sprains are caused by a sudden movement of the head in any direction; these are common after road traffic accidents or sudden jerking movements. The sudden, vigorous movement of the head stretches and strains the soft tissues of the neck

It typically causes pain, stiffness and a temporary loss of movement in the neck. Headaches, muscle spasms and pain in the shoulders or arms are other possible symptoms.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of whiplash often take a while to develop after an accident.

Any inflammation (swelling) and bruising in the neck muscles won't usually be obvious at the time of the accident.

It may take 6 to 12 hours for the symptoms of whiplash to become apparent. The pain and stiffness is often worse on the day after the injury and may worsen over the next 2 days.

Common symptoms of neck sprain include:

- Neck pain and stiffness.
- Neck swelling.
- Tenderness along the back of the neck.
- A reduction in, or loss of movement in, the neck.
- Headaches.
- Muscle spasms

What to look out for:

If you develop any of the symptoms below please consult your GP or return to the Emergency Department: -

- Tingling or numbness in your arms
- Inability to use your arm or hand
- Weakness in your arm or hand
- Significant pain not relieved by analgesia

What is the treatment?

Soft tissue injuries of the neck usually settle without any specific treatments, they are treated by dealing with the pain and stiffness. Despite the pain the best way to recover from the injury is to stay active and restore normal movement and function as soon as possible. After a few days the symptoms should begin to improve. In about 60% of cases, the symptoms improve significantly or completely disappear within one to four weeks.

It can sometimes take a few months for the symptoms to disappear completely and some people still have some neck pain and stiffness for a long time after the injury.

- Apply ice to the sore area for 10 to 15 minutes four times per day for the first two days. Put the ice in a plastic bag and place a towel between the bag of ice and your skin.
- Exercise as soon as possible starting gentle and gradually build up
 - Tuck your chin into your chest and then relax
 - Turn your head and then look over your shoulder on both sides
 - Touch your ear down onto your shoulder on both sides
 - Bend your head backwards and forwards
- Painkillers taken regularly rather than when the pain gets unbearable will improve recovery, prevent the pain getting worse and allow exercise

Preventing whiplash

Correctly adjusting the headrests in your vehicle may help to prevent whiplash by stopping your head from moving backwards. It is difficult to prevent your head moving forwards or sideways.

Further information

Clinical Knowledge Summaries

<http://cks.nice.org.uk/neck-pain-whiplash-injury>

Tell us your views

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your treatment and care, please speak to a senior member of staff or to the nurse looking after you. The matrons are also available during normal working hours and they welcome your views.

Friends and Family Test

Whatever your experience you can give feedback by answering the Friends & Family test question – How likely are you to recommend our A&E Department to family and friends if they needed similar care or treatment?

This can be completed online at <http://surveys.this.nhs.uk> using tag name **chftae** or by completing the form available within the department.

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Manager

Emergency Department

Huddersfield Royal Infirmary

Telephone No: 01484 342396

www.cht.nhs.uk

or

Calderdale Royal Hospital

Telephone No: Halifax: 01422 222325

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Amennyiben ezt az információt más formátumban vagy nyelven szeretné megkapni, vegye fel a kapcsolatot fenti részlegünkkel.

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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