

COMMON CAUSES OF NECK PAIN

POOR POSTURE & MUSCLE STRAIN

Overuse, such as too many hours hunched over a steering wheel or poor posture in front of a computer terminal, usually triggers muscle strain. As your muscles fatigue, your neck bones and disks bear an increased load which can contribute to pinched nerves and worsen symptoms of osteoarthritis. Occupations such as machinists, keyboard operators and professional drivers are at a higher risk to develop neck ailments.

TMJ DISORDERS

The TMJ - Temporomandibular joint - is the joint at which the jaw is hinged to the skull. Painful TMJ problems occur in people who overuse or abuse this joint. Because the neck and the TMJ are so closely connected, the TMJ can cause neck pain and vice versa.

WHIPLASH

Injuries to the neck caused by a sudden movement of the head, backward, forward, or sideways is referred to as "whiplash." This can be caused by auto accidents, sports injuries or an accident at work and is the most common traumatic injury to the neck area.

REFERRED PAIN

Neck pain has many causes. For instance, leaning into your computer monitor can do it, as can spending too much time hunched over your workbench. The pain can usually be eased without medical care, but neck pain can, at times, be a sign of something more serious. Neck pain can be referred, meaning an underlying problem elsewhere causes the neck pain. For example, shoulder injuries and pain cause nearby muscles in your neck to tighten. Rheumatoid arthritis and related diseases also can cause referred pain.

CERVICAL DISC DEGENERATION

In cervical disk degeneration (typically age 40 onwards), the normal gelatin-like center of the disk degenerates and the space between vertebrae narrows causing pain. The cervical disk may also protrude and cause pressure on the spinal cord or nerve roots. This is known as a herniated cervical disk.

TELEPHONE RELATED NECK PAIN

Simple talking on the phone can create neck problems. Not only does this put stress on the neck but over a long period of time can cause the cervical discs to place pressure on the nerves.

"PAIN IN THE NECK"?

Pain in the cervical region can cause arm pain as well as pain in the neck. "Why? In the case of the arms, it's because the nerves that branch out from the neck go all the way down into the arms and into the hands. Sometimes it's difficult to tell whether the pain is actually originating in the neck, or the arms or both. Symptoms in the arms include numbness, tingling, cold aching, and "pins and needles." These symptoms can be confused with carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) which the nerve sheath that runs down the center of the forearm becomes inflamed and restricts the gliding movement of the nerve. It is possible, however, for a nerve impingement to start much further "up the chain," in the neck region. It's also possible for the nerve impingement to be taking place both in the neck and in the arms.

REPETITIVE AND IMPROPER LIFTING

Another cause of neck pain is poor and repetitive lifting occupations. Often, the lower back is at risk, but the cervical region is just as vulnerable.

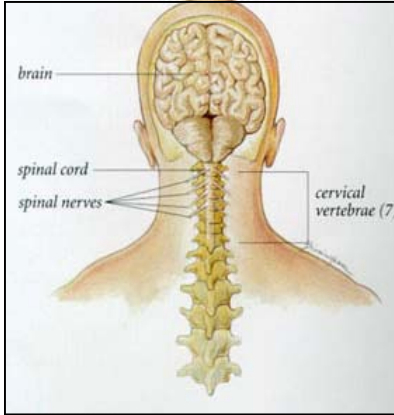


19065 Hickory Creek Drive, Suite 240, Mokena, IL 60448
 Ph: 800-331-6062 • Fax: 708-535-8028 • www.diatri.net

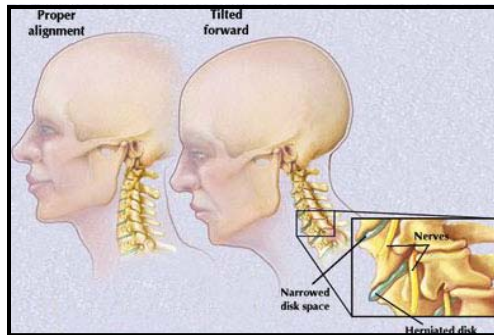


For Nationwide Diagnostic Scheduling
Ph: 800-331-6062 or Fax: 708-535-8028

Visit us at: www.diatri.net



Neck Pain and the Appropriate Diagnostic Test



- See the doctor when:**
- Severe pain from an injury
 - Shooting pain
 - Chronic pain that doesn't improve
 - Loss of strength
 - Pain at night
 - Changes in bowel and bladder patterns
 - Neck pain associated with pressure or pain in your chest

A doctor often will be able to diagnose the cause of neck pain and recommend treatment just by asking questions about the type, location and onset of the pain. If this, plus a thorough medical exam, doesn't reveal the nature of the problem a doctor may use imaging techniques, such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or computerized tomography (CT), that can show compression of nerve roots, narrowing of nerve root outlets, spinal cord and disk problems. Electromyography (EMG), a test that evaluates the electrical activity in nerve and muscle, may help determine whether there's nerve damage. Myelography, which involves imaging after injection of a dye, may be helpful in determining if there is impingement of nerves or the spinal cord.

COMMON CPT CODES USED TO DIAGNOSE NECK PROBLEMS

72125 - CT Cervical Spine
 72141 - MRI Cervical Spine
 72240 - Myelogram

72127 - CT Cervical Spine w/wo Contrast
 72156 - MRI Cervical Spine w/wo Contrast
 95860 - EMG