

What is Whiplash?

Whiplash occurs when the soft tissue, bones, nerves and tendons in the neck are stretched and strained beyond their normal limit. Often after the body is thrown forwards in a sudden, forceful movement.

Whiplash or WAD (whiplash associated disorder), causes pain, stiffness and loss of movement of the neck.

Other symptoms include:

- Headaches
- Muscle spasms, and
- Pain in the neck, shoulder and arms.

Causes

Whiplash is most commonly caused as a result of a road traffic accident, often occurring from a stationary car being hit from behind.

A motor vehicle collision involves a sudden acceleration or deceleration, the force of which is transferred on to the structures of the neck. This results in trauma of the soft tissues in the neck.

However a whiplash can also result from a blow to the head, strenuous physical activity, a simple trip or fall or through long-term repetitive damage to the neck.



Symptoms of Whiplash

Symptoms of a whiplash injury often do not appear when the injury is caused. It may take 6-12 hours for symptoms to show and they may continue to get worse in the days after the injury. Sometimes, it may even take a few days for any symptoms to show.

Common symptoms of whiplash are:

- Neck pain
- Stiffness
- Neck swelling
- Tenderness along the back of the neck
- Loss of movement in the neck, and
- Headaches

Other symptoms may include:

- Pain in the lower back
- Pains, numbness, or parasthesia (pins and needles) in the arms or hands
- Muscle spasms
- Dizziness
- Difficulty in swallowing
- Blurred vision
- Ringing in the ears

Sometimes whiplash can lead to loss of memory, poor concentration and irritability. Usually, symptoms begin to improve after a few days and in approximately 60% of cases, symptoms completely resolve after four weeks. It may take some people's symptoms several months to completely disappear.



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Advice, Treatment & Rehabilitation

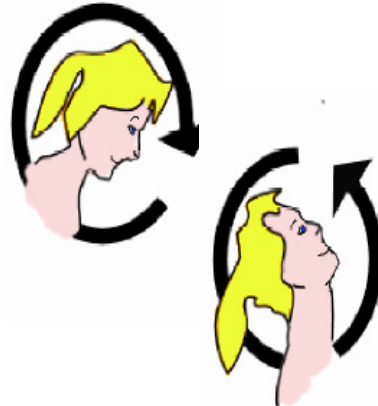
Advice:

To reduce pain and swelling:

- Use an ice pack (wrapped in a tea towel), place it on your neck for 25mins up to a maximum of hourly.
- Take painkillers or anti-inflammatory medication. Visit your GP for advice/prescription of medication.
- Gentle neck range of movement exercises (forwards, backwards, side to side and turning). Don't circle your neck.
- Maintain a good posture.
- Use a firm supporting pillow for sleeping.

Physiotherapy treatment involves:

- Lifestyle Advice.
- Exercise Programmes.
- Stretches.
- Soft tissue massage.
- Advice on postural management
- Ultrasound.
- Mobilisation of the neck.
- Manipulation.
- Traction.
- Acupuncture.



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