



## Whiplash

Whiplash is the term to describe neck pain and injury after an accident. It's actually spraining of your neck's soft tissues (ligaments, tendons, muscles, discs, and small joints) and can occur in car accidents, sporting activities and accidental falls. Symptoms can include neck pain, stiffness and headaches and sometimes radiating pain to the shoulder blade and arm. The amount of pain and stiffness varies between people and the type of injury. Turning your head or looking up (e.g., driving, working at a computer) can all be painful and restricted.

### **Causes of whiplash**

Whiplash is caused by a sudden violent jerking of the neck. Experts agree that whiplash causes injury to the muscles, ligaments, tendons, discs, and small joints of the spine. Fortunately most whiplash injuries aren't serious and often recover in a few weeks. A small percentage of people can have persisting symptoms that last several months but more serious injuries (e.g., fractures, nerve injuries) are not common.

### **How physiotherapists help**

Physiotherapists are highly skilled at examining and treating whiplash. Research shows that getting your neck moving soon after the injury speeds up recovery. Rest can cause more stiffness, increased muscle weakness and delayed recovery. Your physiotherapist will help you improve your neck's strength and movement. Treatment may include:

- Education in posture and positioning to manage pain
- Specific exercises to reduce pain, restore mobility and strength
- Manual therapy treatments to reduce pain, restore mobility
- Modalities (e.g., acupuncture, electrical simulation, heat, cold) for temporary pain relief
- Rehabilitation program to safely prepare you for return to normal activity, sport or work

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**our physiotherapist will:**

- Ask questions and observe how your neck is aligned, moves and where it hurts
- Screen out more serious injuries that require medical follow-up
- Examine the area, test range of motion, muscle strength, and perform special tests assess nerve function
- Develop a treatment plan tailored to you, depending on the situation and time since the accident

