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*"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"*

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## Got a Pain in the Neck?

Not a day goes by that I do not have someone come into my office complaining of neck pain. This problem can affect almost anyone, young or old. The pain itself is usually due to strained or tense muscles, which is often combined with inflammation (swelling) of the joints in your neck. In rare instances, neck pain can be caused by arthritis or injury to the discs between your neck (cervical) vertebrae. Whenever someone suffers from a neck problem, there are other symptoms that may accompany it. These include headaches, shoulder pain, upper back, or down your arm.

There are many different potential causes of neck pain. I will list a few of the more common ones that I have noticed from patients in my office.

- Looking down for too long a time.
- Using a pillow to sleep on that is too flat, too high or does not give your head the right support.
- Sleeping on your stomach or with your neck twisted to one side.
- Resting your forehead on your upright fist or arm.
- Watching TV with your head turned.
- Reading lying down.
- Stress (physical or emotional).
- A whiplash-type injury.
- Poor posture.
- Being hit in the head or on your neck.
- Exercising your upper body and arms too much at one time.

Other than seeing your chiropractor to have an accurate diagnosis made, followed by conservative treatment, there are other things you can do to eliminate your neck pain. I will list some of them below.

- Use good body posture and exercise your neck.
- Take several mini breaks during your daily tasks, particularly if you are sitting one position for long periods of time.
- When working at a computer, the top of the monitor screen should be eye level.

- Talking on the phone a lot can aggravate your neck. If you must use the phone for long periods of time, use a headset or speakerphone.
- Move your car seat to a more upright position so it will better support your head and lower back.
- If your neck bothers you more in the morning, think about how you slept and what you did the day before.
- Try a special cervical pillow and/or a firmer mattress
- Try not to use pillows that make your head go forward when you are sleeping on your back.
- When sleeping on your side, use a pillow that is thick enough to prevent your head from leaning downward (keep your nose in line with the center of your body)
- Use relaxation exercises, if you think stress is causing your neck pain.
- Do neck exercises once a day to help make your neck muscles stronger.
- Use cold packs placed on muscles that hurt for 10 to 20 min. as often as once every hour. This helps with pain, spasms and swelling.
- Try to keep your head looking straight ahead rather than a downward position
- Exercise daily. It decreases your stress and helps strengthen/relax your muscles. It also helps keep the joints in your neck healthy.

To find out what exactly is causing your neck pain, or even what exercises you can do to prevent it, contact me at my office.