

# Dr. Colin Gage

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

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## Neck Pain

Although back pain occurs more often in the general public, neck pain remains a very common source of pain and disability. It is definitely one of the top three reasons why so many people see a chiropractor. It can occur in almost anyone and does not have to result from a motor vehicle accident or another traumatic injury.

What causes neck pain?

Most neck pain is caused by activities that result in repeated or prolonged movements of the neck's muscles, ligaments, tendons, vertebrae, or joints. This can result in a strained muscle, sprained ligament, spasm of the neck muscles, or stiffness (with inflammation) of the neck joints. For example, painting a ceiling, sleeping with your neck twisted to one side, slouching, or staying in one position for a long period of time can all cause neck pain. Less frequently, neck pain is caused by an injury, such as whiplash, that occurs in a motor vehicle accident, or a fall, or by another medical condition, such as arthritis.

Prevention

Neck pain that is caused by stress, a joint sprain, muscle spasm, or muscle strain can often be prevented by using good posture, getting regular exercise, and avoiding long periods in positions that stress the neck. For example, prolonged computer work, painting a ceiling, or watching television in a position where your head is turned all put excessive stress on the neck and will eventually lead to neck pain.

If your neck pain is worse at the end of the day, evaluate your posture and body mechanics. For example, avoid slouching or a head-forward posture when sitting at your desk. Sit straight in your chair with your lower back supported, feet flat on the floor, and shoulders relaxed. Avoid sitting for long periods without getting up or changing positions. Take short breaks several times an hour to stretch your neck muscles (free stretches are available on our website at [www.merrittchiro.com](http://www.merrittchiro.com)). If you work at a computer, adjust the monitor so the top of the screen is at eye level. Use a document holder that puts your work at the same level as the screen. If you use the telephone a lot, consider using a headset or speakerphone. Do not cradle the phone on your shoulder. When driving, adjust your car seat to a more upright position that supports your head and lower back. Make sure that you are not reaching for the steering wheel while driving. Your arms should be in a slightly flexed, comfortable position.

If neck pain is worse in the morning, check your pillow and sleeping posture. Avoid sleeping on your stomach with your neck twisted or bent. Use a pillow that keeps your neck straight, neither too high nor too flat. As well, it shouldn't force your head forward when you lie on your back but it should allow you to align your nose with the centre of your body when you lie on your side. Special neck support pillows called cervical pillows or rolls may lessen stress on your neck when you sleep.

Regular preventative chiropractic treatment will help restore and maintain the full mobility of the joints of the neck. Whenever any joint has its full potential movement, rather than being stiff and tight, it is able to handle more stress

and it will heal itself more quickly and completely. When you combine chiropractic treatment with regular exercise, the ability of your neck to heal itself and prevent neck pain from occurring in the first place is even greater.