

Major Causes of Neck Pain

Our necks are subjected to repeated stress and minor injury. These injuries may not cause pain at the time of injury but repeated injuries can add up and eventually result in degeneration of the cervical spine, causing neck pain. Most neck pain is due to degenerative changes that occur in the neck. The overall condition of the cervical spine can determine how fast you recover from injury and whether your neck pain will become a chronic problem.



For chronic neck pain, there may be no quick fix or complete cure. You will need to work with a medical professional to try to improve the problem and to slow down the degenerative process.

The physician's role in the treatment of neck pain is to find the main causes that need treatment right away. A medical professional will try to keep your neck pain from becoming a chronic condition by teaching you how to slow down the degenerative process and prevent further injury.

In order to understand the symptoms and treatment choices, a neck pain sufferer should have some understanding of the general anatomy of the spine and neck. This includes becoming familiar with the various parts that make up the neck. The more you know, the more you will be able to talk with your doctor or health care professional in words that will help them better understand your specific problem.

The parts of the Cervical Spine and How They Work

The neck includes the cervical spine (upper most part of the spine) and the soft tissues that surround the spine. These soft tissues include nerves, muscles, ligaments, tendons, and blood vessels. The cervical spine is made up of the first seven vertebrae in the spine (these are referred to as C1 through C7).

The vertebrae are the 24 bones that are linked together to make up the spinal column and these bones protect the spinal cord. In the center of each vertebrae is a large hole and these holes line up to form a "bony tube" called the spinal canal which provides protection and support for the spinal cord. As the spinal cord leaves the brain, it travels down the spinal canal to the tailbone. The nerves that leave the spine in the upper area, (cervical spine) travel into the arms to the hands. The nerves that leave the spine in the chest area (thoracic spine) mostly go into the chest and belly area. The nerves that leave the spine in the lower area (lumbar spine), travel into the legs and feet. One common cause of pain comes from pressure on the nerve roots, sometimes causing pain and numbness in the neck or lower body. A joint is where two or more bones meet. Bony knobs, called facets extend from each vertebrae and overlap each other to form a facet joint. Facet joints link the vertebrae together and provide a mobile connection between each vertebra. The facet joints allow the neck to bend and turn.