



Orthopedic Associates OF PORT HURON

Cervical (neck) Spine Disorders: Don't Let It Be a Pain in Your Neck

Neck pain caused by a cervical spine disorder is a very common problem for many adult Americans, especially during the summer. Most of us have a “honey-do” list that consists of many activities requiring repetitive lifting and awkward positioning, such as gardening, digging, and lawn maintenance. These activities can cause damage to the structures supporting the neck, which may result in pain and loss of function.

The cervical spine is composed of many different anatomic structures, including muscles, bones, ligaments, and joints. Each of these structures has nerve endings that can detect painful problems when they occur. The different parts of the cervical spine are normally well balanced and able to handle all of the movements, stresses, and strains of the body gracefully. However, when the different parts of the cervical spine are injured or start to wear out, your neck can be a significant source of pain and discomfort.

Studies show that approximately fifty percent of the population has evidence of degenerative changes in their cervical spine by the age of fifty. These changes happen because the discs that act as shock absorbers between the vertebral bodies of the cervical spine wear out, as we grow older. As the intervertebral discs wear out, they begin to collapse, or herniate, and become less flexible. The common causes of neck pain and cervical disorders include arthritis, injuries, and trauma. In some situations neck pain can also be a warning sign of something more serious such as spinal cord compression, a tumor or spinal infection.

Any patient suffering from neck, shoulder, head or arm pain should be examined by a doctor in order to determine where the pain originates and what the cause is. The tissues involved in producing the pain must be identified, and how they are being irritated must also be understood. The history of the pain and any activities that may have triggered it are also important factors in diagnosis and treatment. Impairment of movement in any part of the cervical spine can be responsible for pain, discomfort and disability.

We Keep You on the Move!

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Accurate physical examination of the neck, shoulder, arm or head requires knowledge of functional anatomy and is imperative in determining the cause of the presenting complaint. The use of x-rays, MRI, and nerve studies (EMG) can be helpful in constructing a more definitive diagnosis.

Once the physician and/or physical therapist determine the probable cause of the pain symptoms, a treatment plan can be created. Some treatment interventions may include pain and/or anti-inflammatory medication and physical therapy including manual cervical traction, facet mobilization, soft tissue mobilization and instruction on proper posture and body mechanics. Other treatment modalities may be utilized including epidural injections, facet joint injections and in some more severe cases, surgery.

If you are suffering from neck pain or pain you believe may be caused by a cervical spine disorder you should seek the medical advice of a physician. If you have any questions, please contact us.

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