

NECK PAIN

Physical Therapy

Definition



The art and science of eradicating or easing pain and improving bodily function by direct physical means, both hands-on and conservative modalities without the use of drugs.



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Types of Neck Pain that Physical Therapy (PT) may help:

- **Injury and Trauma** occur when the neck moves in jerky or unnatural ways, causing stress on the muscles and joints. Whiplash is the most common neck trauma, and can make movements stiff and painful.
- **Pinched Nerve** is the term used for when a nerve bundle is constricted or compressed with movement or the positioning of your head and neck. Symptoms vary but can include numbness, tingling or “pins and needles”, and sharp pains radiating from the affected area.
- **Cervical Headaches** can be an indication that the first three cervical joints of the neck are injured or stressed. The symptoms include those similar to the migraine, with pain, nausea and sensitivity to light and sound but the ache begins in the base of the skull and can move from place to place around the head.
- **Arthritis** can develop with age or as the tissue or cartilage which protects the joints wears down. This can cause painful or stiff movements, inflamed joints, and a limited range of comfortable motion.
- **Strains and Sprains** may happen with traumatic injury but they can also occur when unbalanced movements are made repetitively. Symptoms can range from slight to severe pains, swelling, and loss of normal motion.

Why Try PT First?

The goals of physical therapy are to restore flexibility, strength, and normal motion in the muscles and joints to allow better movement without the stress that causes neck pain.

Physical therapists (PTs) are highly trained to identify the faulty moving components, caused by weak or tight muscles that can stop or change

normal motion and cause pain. Using the wide array of treatments including ice, heat, hands on manual therapy, exercises and education your PT can help you to recover pain free movements.

As a result, you not only function better but have reduced pain and discomfort as well as the tools to prevent further injury and pain.

What Treatments Should You Expect?

1. Hands-On Manual Therapy Techniques are very specialized techniques done by physical therapists using their hands in precise ways to relax muscles in spasm, lengthen tight muscles, restore balance and improve the range motion of your neck.

2. Exercises will be used to aid your recovery. The goal is to improve your body’s ability to hold onto the changes the therapy makes, to stabilize and support your neck and make you strong and flexible so that you will be protected from further injury. Exercise will help you get back to a level of daily activity that restores your quality of life at home and at work.

3. Posture and/or Body Mechanics Education will help you use safer positioning of your body during daily activities. This can not only aid your recovery but can help you prevent further injury.

4. Modalities or the use of heat, cold, electricity etc. may be used to help decrease the pain you are experiencing, improve your circulation and/or help the muscles relax. This is usually done as a preparation for doing exercises or activities to improve strength and flexibility.



What Should You Do Before Your PT Appointment?

1. Follow any advice that your doctor gives you.
2. Rest as much as possible.
3. Apply ice to reduce swelling and to ease pain.
4. Avoid activities or movements that may cause pain.

What Should You Expect at Your First PT Visit?

Paperwork: On your first visit to our clinic there will be some paperwork to complete regarding your medical history. This will enable the physical therapist to develop an appropriate treatment plan. Also insurance information will be collected at this time.

Evaluation: Your physical therapist will be doing a full evaluation of your condition on your first visit. What the PT will be looking for is any loss of normal motion, flexibility or strength in your neck and surrounding areas that could be causing your pain. The PT will evaluate how this is affecting the function of your whole body during daily activities.

Proper Attire: You should come dressed so that you can move about as comfortably as possible whether standing, sitting or lying down.

If you have been living with pain and want to change your quality of life, or just want relief from the daily pain call your PT today to set an appointment. The sooner that you ask your PT for help and start to manage your pain the better the outcome will be.