



## Whiplash

Whiplash is a term used to describe neck pain following an injury to the soft tissues of your neck. It is caused by an abnormal motion or force that causes movement beyond the neck's normal range of motion. Commonly whiplash occurs as a result of motor vehicle accidents, sporting activities, and accidental falls.



A number of different structures may be injured by a whiplash injury including:

- Spinal muscles
- Spinal discs
- Spinal joints
- Supporting ligaments
- Vertebrae (fractures)

In most cases a combination of these structures will be affected and an X-ray is often recommended if a high velocity injury has occurred. Whiplash injuries will usually result in neck pain and stiffness but it is not uncommon to experience additional back pain, shoulder and arm pain, and headaches. Symptoms are not always immediately present, and there may be some latency before they appear.

Physiotherapy is recommended in the treatment of managing a Whiplash injury. Physiotherapy is initially aimed at reducing any muscle spasm and restoring normal range of motion usually employing hands-on techniques such as:

- Massage
- Mobilization
- Stretching
- Stability exercises
- Heat

It is important that normal movement is maintained or restored as early as possible as this usually is associated with a good recovery. In most cases it is also important to strengthen the small muscles that give your neck support. Your physiotherapist will guide you through a rehabilitation program incorporating appropriate exercises to assist you back to normal activity and life.

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