

WHAT A PAIN IN THE NECK!



4 STEPS to identifying and treating cervical spine problems

THE NECK is comprised of seven cervical vertebrae starting at the base of your skull. It is a remarkable and complex apparatus. It supports your heavy — up to 12 pounds! — head, and allows it to move in multiple directions. Ligaments, tendons, muscles, bones, cartilage, and nerves are all bundled within this small space, which makes the cervical spine prone to pain caused by injury or wear and tear.



1 SYMPTOMS OF NECK PROBLEMS

Neck problems don't always cause just neck pain. Because of nerve involvement, cervical issues can also cause pain in your arms or hands, even down your back. **Common symptoms are:**

- > Stiff or sore neck
- > Sharp or shooting pain in a specific area of your neck
- > Tingling, numbness, or weakness in your shoulders, arms, or hands—with or without neck pain
- > Radiating pain from neck to shoulder, shoulder blade, arm, or hand
- > Headache

COMMON CAUSES OF NECK PAIN

A **TEMPORARY** strain or sprain of the neck can be caused by:

- > **Trauma:** Neck pain caused by whiplash is the No. 1 injury in auto accidents.
- > **Sleeping:** Spending the night in the wrong position can leave you with a sore neck.
- > **Posture:** Your neck suffers when you work at the computer, slouch, sit for too long, or constantly look down at your smartphone.



LASTING neck pain is often caused by structural problems in the cervical spine, including:

- > **Osteoarthritis**, which causes the cartilage to deteriorate
- > **Degenerative disc disease**, which dehydrates the gel-like substance in your discs, causing them to bulge
- > **Herniated discs** are displaced when the cushioning gel leaks out, allowing the disc to pinch a nerve
- > **Cervical radiculopathy** is pain caused by the compression or irritation of nerves in the neck
- > **Spondylolisthesis** causes facet joints to disintegrate
- > **Cervical spinal stenosis** is a weakening that causes the spinal column to narrow

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WHEN SHOULD YOU SEEK HELP?

If pain doesn't go away in two weeks, worsens, or interferes with activities of daily life, see your primary care physician to assess your condition and refer you to a specialist if needed. If you have been diagnosed with a spine condition, such as those listed above, a neurosurgeon is best suited to help you understand your treatment options.

3 CONSERVATIVE NECK PAIN TREATMENTS

Surgery is rarely the first line of treatment for neck pain. You should try non-surgical options first, such as:

- > Medication, including nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, muscle relaxants, or pain medications
- > Chiropractic care, acupuncture, or massage
- > Physical therapy
- > Steroid injections
- > Bracing



WHEN TO CONSIDER NECK SURGERY

If conservative treatments are not relieving your pain, your physician may want to discuss surgery. Nearly 50% of spine surgeries today are done on an outpatient basis, meaning you'll be home the same day. **Spine surgery options include:**

Minimally invasive spine surgery

Artificial disc replacement

Spinal fusion

Decompression surgery

Image-guided surgery

To learn when surgery is most effective, download a **FREE cervical spine surgery guide** at neurosurgeryone.org/neck-surgery.



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NeurosurgeryOne's spine experts can help you find the treatment that will work best for your condition. To make an appointment at any of our locations, call **720-638-7500**.