



1-800-636-3971

Prince George's County

January 2006

What a Pain In the Neck?

By James L. Holding, D.C., C.C.S.P.,
Board Certified Chiropractic Sports
Physician, Holding Chiropractic
Sports Injury Clinic

Is it hard to look over your shoulder? Is there a constant pulling or throbbing pain in your neck? Do you notice a grinding sound when you turn your head? Do you constantly feel tense in the shoulders?

Most of us suffer at some time during our life from pain in the region of the neck, or pain arising from the neck which is felt across the shoulders, between the shoulder blades, and even in the arms. Pain coming from the neck can also be felt in the hand, and symptoms such as pins and needles or numbness can be experienced in the arm, hand, or fingers. Some people are troubled by headaches, the cause of which can often be traced back to problems in the neck.

Usually these aches and pains occur intermittently, that is, there are days with pain as well as days without pain. The symptoms may appear mysteriously, often for no apparent reason, and just as mysteriously they can disappear. These aches and pains may also occur constantly, that is, pain to some

degree or another is felt at all times.

The most common cause of neck pain is a mechanical or structural distortion of the spine causing the joints in the back of the neck to become misaligned or locked (fixated). Most of the pain sensing nerves in the neck are located in these joints. These smooth interlocking joint surfaces allow you to rotate your head and bend your head up and down. If these joints become misaligned neck pain is usually the result.

A thorough chiropractic examination can determine if you are a good candidate for chiropractic care. These tests might involve evaluating your ability to turn and bend your neck. Muscle tone of the supporting muscles in the neck may also be tested. Diagnostic imaging to reveal the underlying structure of the spine may be requested, as well as tests designed to determine if your nerves are pinched.

A popular response to neck pain is taking drugs (over the counter or prescription) to cover up the symptoms, but neck pain is not caused by a lack of aspirin or other drugs. The chiropractic approach is to find the underlying

cause of your pain. A review of the most current scientific literature on neck pain concludes that spinal manipulation (chiropractic care) is the least expensive, safest, and most effective treatment for short term (acute) and long term (chronic) neck pain. With improved structure (alignment) and function, neck pain often diminishes or totally disappears without the use of addictive drugs or the harmful side effects of surgery.

A more difficult problem to correct is the degenerative changes that result from neglecting the cause of your symptoms. Years of uncorrected spinal problems often cause bone spurs, disc thinning (degeneration) and other forms of spinal decay (spondylosis). These types of problems may respond more slowly to treatment, and some type of ongoing/supportive chiropractic care may be necessary once you have improved, to help maintain your progress.

As a specialist in problems of the spine, nerves, and muscles, the doctor of chiropractic is recognized as the most qualified to successfully evaluate and treat neck injuries.