



## **Cervical Radiculopathy**

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Cervical radiculopathy... Try to say it five times fast. Luckily, explaining it is much easier than the tongue twister. Commonly called a pinched nerve, a radiculopathy occurs when the nerve (in this case, leaving the neck) gets irritated, and leads to pain or altered sensation. Pain may not be experienced in the neck, but rather in the shoulders, arms, or hands. Symptoms of pain may be achy, deep, or dull. They could also be sharp and shooting along the path of the nerve. There might not even be pain at all. Symptoms could also be weakness or numbness in certain areas of the arms.

What causes these symptoms? Two common culprits include herniated discs and bone spurs. Discs are soft, fluid filled cushions that sit between each of our vertebrae. If the disc puts pressure on the nerves leaving our spine we may end up with the symptoms stated above. Bone spurs are a result of degeneration of the spine, and become more common as we age. These spurs may rub against and irritate nerve roots in the neck or back. Diagnosis of radiculopathy comes from your physician after a physical exam or with the aid of X-rays or MRI's.

Treatment may include cervical collars, pillows, or physical therapy. Your physical therapist will help to reduce pain, maintain motion and strength in your neck and arms, and teach proper posture and activities to avoid/minimize pain. If these conservative treatment measures mentioned just aren't doing the trick, you may have to explore more options with your physician.