

Neck Pain is No Joke!

Lisa Van Berkel, PT
Physical Therapist
Ham Lake Physical Therapy

Neck pain is nothing to laugh at and it is important to understand that neck problems are seldom caused by a single event. Most people think that their neck problems are a result of a specific injury, but a problem can be developing long before it is noticed. Most neck problems or pain are the result of many factors such as poor posture, faulty body mechanisms, stressful living and working situations, loss of flexibility and general decline of physical fitness. The most common neck disorders are muscle spasms and inflammation, acute or chronic strains or sprains, joint stiffness, disc herniation or bulge, and osteoarthritis.

The first step to managing your neck pain is to understand the key to having a healthy back and neck is maintaining the curves of the spine in a “balanced” position. When the neck and spine are in an “unbalanced” position the result is usually pain or discomfort. The second step to managing your neck pain is to understand what you can do to prevent or relieve your neck problem.

Tips to help prevent or relieve your neck pain:

- Bring your work close to you and raise it to the correct height. If you sit at a computer raise the screen to eye level and in front to prevent looking down.
- Use a pillow that will give you good neck support. Don't use multiple pillows under your head.
- Utilize proper body mechanics when lifting. Keep your head upright and back slightly arched. Keep weight close to your body.
- Interrupt or change stressful positions frequently.
- Exercise and maintain a healthy diet. Suggested exercises or stretches to help with neck pain include: neck rotation and side bending exercises, chin tuck, corner stretch, shoulder shrugs, shoulder rolls, and shoulder blade squeezes.

So, if you are experiencing limited neck range of motion or are having severe neck pain or muscle spasms you may want to contact your primary physician or your local physical therapist for further information or assistance.