


WHIPLASH

ADVICE FOR PATIENTS



Most commonly associated with car accidents, whiplash refers to injury caused by a sudden forceful movement of the neck. In simple terms, it's a neck sprain or strain normally the result of a quick back and forward movement - leading to the phrase 'whiplash.'

Whiplash presents itself as pain and stiffness in the neck. Patients may struggle with their usual range of movement and you, or your physio, may also feel knots at the site(s) of pain.

Car accidents aren't the only cause of whiplash though, and other reasons people find themselves with the condition include trips and falls or being pushed or punched.

At W5Physio we sometimes see whiplash in individuals who play sport, and in

particular, contact sports.

It's a very common problem and physiotherapy, along with specific exercises can improve symptoms associated with damage to neck muscles and/or soft tissue, ligaments, discs and nerve roots that can be affected in cases of whiplash.

Symptoms can be minor and manageable, or severe and debilitating. But because each case of whiplash is different, it's best to get a full diagnosis and personal, tailored advice on your individual circumstances.

Never wear a neck collar without getting advice from a doctor or physio...contrary to what you may see on soap operas, most cases of whiplash don't require a neck support.

DIAGNOSIS & OUTLOOK

If you suspect you may have whiplash, W5Physio can definitely help. We recommend making an appointment with one of our physios who will confirm a whiplash diagnosis through carrying out a number of tests. These will include checking your range of movement when moving your head and neck in different directions.

We may carry out further procedures to ensure an accurate diagnosis, such as a hands-on examination and/or manipulation/massage. And we'll ask you lots of questions about whether you've experienced headaches, dizziness or any

problems with concentration as these can be less obvious side effects of whiplash too. We'll provide ergonomic advice and prescribe tailored exercises.

Physiotherapy is known to get great results in most instances of whiplash. It'll improve the vast majority symptoms including neck pain, tightness, stiffness and a decreased range of motion.

Luckily, most whiplash cases are a temporary issue that will improve in time.

Generally, whiplash patients can look forward to a full recovery with professional medical advice including a tailored course of treatment, exercises and/or rest and sometimes advice for adjustments to how you sleep.



EXERCISES



Your physio will be able to advise on the best exercises for your case of whiplash, but here are some generic moves that can help to improve whiplash symptoms. Do them slowly and gently and stop if you feel any additional pain.

1.

CHIN TUCKS/ CERVICAL RETRACTIONS

Focus on a spot on the wall - make a double chin taking your head back. Don't tilt head up or down. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 10 times

2.

SHOULDER ROTATION

Sitting or standing, arms relaxed at sides. Lift shoulders up towards ears and rotate backwards. Repeat 10 times

3.

SIDE BEND

Move your ear towards your shoulder then place your hand over the opposite ear. Gently stretch the ear closer to the shoulder. Hold 20 seconds and repeat 3 times on each side.

PREVENTION TIPS



While it may sound difficult to prevent whiplash, given that most cases result from accidents which cause a sudden forceful movement, there are measures you can take to make incidents of whiplash less likely. These tips can be particularly useful for patients who have recovered from whiplash and are concerned about future reoccurrences.

- 1) Stay fit and active. As is true for the prevention of most injuries, building fitness levels, strength and flexibility are all key. Resistance training to strengthen the neck and shoulders can be particularly useful in preventing whiplash or avoiding future occurrences if you've experienced the problem in the past.
- 2) As many incidents of whiplash happen in cars, check your ergonomics. Ensure your seat is upright (i.e. not too reclined) and your headrest is in a comfortable, supportive position and would protect your head/neck should you be in a collision or need to break suddenly. Also make sure you always wear your seatbelt and are wearing it correctly.
- 3) Similarly, ensure you're wearing suitable protective equipment when playing sports that could lead to whiplash.
- 4) If you think you're displaying symptoms of whiplash, apply ice as soon as possible. You should continue to use ice intermittently for 5-10 minutes at a time until you can seek further treatment and advice from a healthcare professional.

If you do experience whiplash symptoms, book in to see us - physio can definitely help to ease your pain and speed up recovery.

FOR MORE ADVICE OR TO BOOK A CONSULTATION, CONTACT W5PHYSIO: