



# Health & Wellness NEWSLETTER

STERLING PT & WELLNESS



# STRESS

## A SILENT CULPRIT BEHIND YOUR ACHING NECK

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# STRESS

## A SILENT CULPRIT BEHIND YOUR ACHING NECK

**Does stress cause neck pain? The short answer is no! At Sterling PT & Wellness, we like to say “contributes to” instead of “cause.” The casual way healthcare professionals throw around terms can lead to confusion and, worse still, ineffective treatment. Fortunately, our highly skilled therapists know how to dig deep and find the root cause of your neck pain, and this information helps you find relief!**



Let's discuss Nicole, a 40-something-year-old working mother of three. Nicole was used to being very active, balancing her work schedule with getting her kids to all the various activities and school functions that come with being a mom nowadays.

Her neck pain first started as a crick in the neck when she woke up one morning. As the day progressed from driving her kids around to sitting at her desk, she noticed turning her head became more difficult and painful, making focusing on work nearly impossible.

Nicole struggled to figure out why her neck started hurting and came to the conclusion that stress “must be” the culprit. The more pain and difficulty moving she had, the more convinced she was that stress was to blame.

### UNDERSTANDING NICOLE'S NECK PAIN

One of the most common things we hear from our patients is that their pain started for “no apparent reason.” Like Nicole, people will wake up with a crick in their neck or notice a stiffness turning when driving in the car. It is also common for people to notice tightness in their upper back and neck after a long day.

So, what is actually the source of the pain? In most cases, there is an issue with the neck joints or the neck muscles due to prolonged positions. Our neck joints don't like remaining in any position for extended periods. In Nicole's case, she first noticed her pain in the morning, which may have been related to her neck position while sleeping. It is also important to note that in Nicole's case, the first sign of any issue was in the morning when she woke up, unrelated to stress.

*Continued inside.*

# **STRESS** A SILENT CULPRIT BEHIND YOUR ACHING NECK

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As Nicole's day progressed, her pain got worse. But this also was more likely related to how she held her neck while driving or sitting at her computer. In both cases, her posture, specifically how she held her neck, seems to have contributed to her pain. Prolonged sitting can lead to a forward head position, resulting in tension to soft tissue (i.e., muscles, tendons, and ligaments) or negative changes to our blood flow.

The muscles of our neck function best when we move them. So, holding her head in one position likely led to irritation of the muscles and affected her ability to move her neck, which in turn caused stress.

Stress "contributes" to neck pain because, when we experience stress, our bodies naturally respond by tensing up as a protective measure. This tension can lead to discomfort, particularly in the neck and upper back region. Research studies have found that individuals with higher stress levels reported increased neck pain as compared to those with lower stress levels. This is why we say "contributes" to, but not the cause of, neck pain.

## HOW PHYSICAL THERAPY CAN HELP ALLEVIATE NECK PAIN

We will target the source of your pain by performing a thorough examination, starting with your medical history and details about how, when, and where your symptoms began. As we saw with Nicole, determining how, when, and why the pain started helps us eliminate possibilities and get to the actual root cause(s).

Our therapists will also analyze your posture and movement to identify any limitations or restrictions contributing to your condition. We'll use this information to design a program that addresses your specific needs.

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***We'll listen to your unique situation and specific issues and then work to help you find relief and get back to your normal routine.***

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Our treatment plans focus on relieving your pain and improving your posture, mobility, strength, etc., and educating you about managing your symptoms. Your program will likely include manual therapy (i.e., soft tissue work and/or joint mobilizations), targeted stretches, exercises, activity modification, or posture recommendations.

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## BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY!

**If you're dealing with neck pain or looking for someone to help you figure out what is causing your issues, call us today and set up a consultation!**



**Call 281.240.3140 Today!**



## Chocolate Shamrock Shake!

### INGREDIENTS

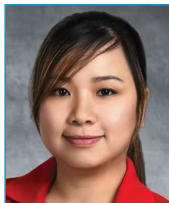
- ¾ cup milk of choice
- ½ cup canned coconut milk, or creamer
- 1 frozen banana (or sub ¾ cup frozen coconut meat)
- 2 ½ tsp cocoa or cacao powder
- Scant ½ tsp salt
- ¼ - ½ tsp pure peppermint extract
- Sweetener of choice, (as desired)
- Chocolate chips, (optional)

**DIRECTIONS:** Blend all ingredients until completely smooth. Pour into a glass, and enjoy! Feel free to experiment by adding 1 tsp of instant coffee to make a frappe, or use a non-frozen banana and heat ingredients on stove top to make Shamrock Hot Chocolate!



## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

### Chi Nguyen, MBA/MHA

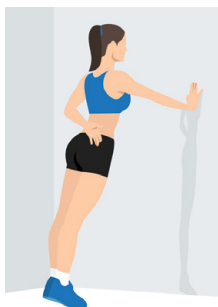


Chi is our Practice Administrator/Billing Manager at Sterling Physical Therapy and Wellness. Chi has a BBA in Business Management from the University of Economics, in Vietnam, where she was born and raised. She moved to Houston TX in 2011 to pursue a higher academic goal and earned a Dual Master's Degree in Healthcare Administration & Business Administration (MHA – MBA) from University of Houston Clear Lake in 2015. Chi is fluent in English and Vietnamese. Chi's next goal is to complete a Doctorate in Physical Therapy that allows her to provide direct patient care and eventually own/manage her own practice. When not working, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends, testing out new food and drink recipes, pottery, and learning about Culinary Art & Hospitality.

## EXERCISE TO TRY AT HOME

### PLANK ON WALL, 1 ARM

Start by standing with a wall in front of you. Place one arm behind your back and your other palm on the wall at about chest level and straighten your arm. Brace your abdominals and step your feet back until your body is in a straight, diagonal line. Hold for 30 seconds.



Always consult your physical therapist or physician before starting exercises you are unsure of doing.

## CHECK US OUT ONLINE

Find out more about Sterling Physical Therapy & Wellness



Scan the QR code to visit our YouTube Channel.

To find out more about the treatments we offer scan this code to visit our website.



## PATIENT SPOTLIGHT

Thomas came to Sterling PT seeking help for his knee pain he experienced after playing pickleball. He was able to process quickly through his exercises and successfully completed his plan of care in no time. He was able to get back on the court pain free and has tons of exercises he can use in the future in case he ever experiences his pain again. Congrats Thomas and go get em on the courts!



## EXERCISE YOUR MIND WITH SUDOKU

	7			3	9	6		
1	6			2		8	9	
	4							3
			4	8	2			5
4			3	9	6			
5							7	
	9	2		5			4	1
		4	2	6			8	

## COME BACK TO PT!

Are you in pain? Are you suffering from an injury? Do you want to become healthier, stronger, and more active?

If you answered yes to any of these questions you need to come back to Sterling Physical Therapy. We are here for you. Call for an appointment today and start your journey to a healthier, happier, more active life.

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