

Patient information

Whiplash injures and neck pain

Barts Health Physiotherapy Website:

www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/physiotherapy



What is neck pain?

Neck pain is pain that arises from the upper part of your back / spine. This can be as a result of a trauma or can start gradually due to poor posture, lifestyle changes, muscle imbalances or joint stiffness.

What is whiplash?

In Whiplash, the neck is forced forwards then backwards very quickly. This causes the neck and surrounding areas to be stretched more than usual. Although road traffic accidents are the most common cause; any activity which results in a quick change to the position of the neck could also be described as a whiplash injury

Is whiplash dangerous?

Most cases of whiplash are not dangerous and will get better with time. If you experience any of the following symptoms, seek medical advice:

- Fainting, collapsing or severe dizziness
- Difficulty speaking or swallowing normally
- Double vision
- Numbness / pins and needles down both arms
- Clumsy movements like knocking or dropping things
- Persistent sore throat

What are the symptoms of whiplash?

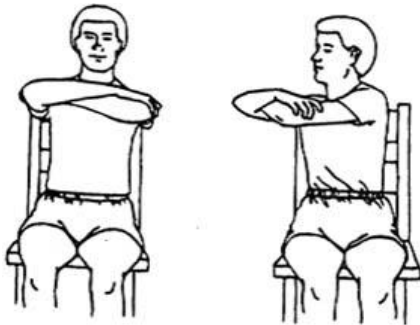
- Neck pain
- Pins and needles or numbness (in one of your arms/hands)
- Pain in shoulders, arms or lower back
- Weak muscles
- Headaches
- Mild dizziness
- Stiffness
- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Concentration or visual disturbances (this is rare)

What can I do to help reduce my pain / symptoms?

- Simple pain medication like Paracetamol or Ibuprofen (ask your pharmacist if you are unsure what to take)
- Physiotherapy can:
 - Assess and confirm your diagnosis
 - Educate you on why you have pain and how to manage it
 - Give you an exercise program. This may involve movement exercises, stretches, and exercises to strengthen neck, back and shoulder muscles
 - Sometimes help by using hands on techniques to improve stiffness and muscle tension
 - Advise you on relaxation techniques

What exercises can I do to help reduce my symptoms?

It is important to start moving your neck, back and shoulders as early as possible, within pain limits. You can try these exercises:



- Sitting in a chair, bring your arms together in front of you
- Rotate your body slowly to the left and to the right
- Repeat 10 to 20 times. Try and do regularly throughout the day



- Sitting in a chair, move / stretch your head from side to side
- Repeat 10 to 20 times each way. Try and do regularly throughout the day



- Lying on your back with your head on a soft surface, turn your head from side to side
- Repeat 10 to 20 times each way. Try and do regularly throughout the day



- In sitting or standing, lift both arms as high as possible.
- Repeat 10 to 20 times each way. Try and do regularly throughout the day
- You can also try rolling or rotating your shoulders

What if my symptoms do not improve?

If your pain does not improve with the exercises or your pain and symptoms increase, please consult your GP for further management.

Where can I get more information?

- www.nhs.uk/conditions/whiplash
- www.patient.co.uk

Contact Information for Barts Health Therapies Department

The Royal London Hospital

Telephone No: 0207 377 7872

Email: TherapiesRLH@bartshealth.nhs.uk

Mile End Hospital

Telephone No: 0207 377 7872

Email: TherapiesMEH@bartshealth.nhs.uk

Whipps Cross University Hospital

Telephone: 0208 535 6671 (Wanstead site: 0208 989 2368, Chingford site: 0208 524 3071)

Email: wxphysio.outpatients@bartshealth.nhs.uk

Newham University Hospital

Telephone No: 0207 363 8141

Email: TherapyOutpatients.Newham@bartshealth.nhs.uk

For patient information leaflets on other conditions please visit:

www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/physiotherapy

Patient Advice and Liaison Service

Please contact us if you need general information or advice about Trust services.

www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/pals

Large print and other languages

For this leaflet in large print, please speak to your clinical team.

For help interpreting this leaflet in other languages, please ring 020 8223 8934.

Tell us what you think

Tweet us **@NHSBartsHealth**

Talk to us via **www.facebook.com/bartshealth**

Leave feedback on NHS Choices www.nhs.uk

Reference: BH/PIN/184

Publication date: March 2014

All our patient information leaflets are reviewed every three years.