



What causes neck pain?

We often describe something or someone unpleasant as being “a pain in the neck,” and anyone who’s ever experienced it firsthand can understand why.

More than 30% of U.S. adults suffer with neck pain each year, and up to 80% will experience it at some point in their lifetime. It can be helpful to know what causes neck pain, either to prevent it from returning, or to stop it from happening in the first place.

WHY DOES MY NECK HURT?

Neck pain can be brief, lasting only several days, or it can become a chronic issue. The discomfort can be near the base of the head, or extend into other areas, including the shoulders and arms.

For some, neck pain is a constant ache, while others may feel a stabbing or burning sensation. Further symptoms can include increased sensitivity to pressure applied to the neck, headache, numbness and tingling in one or both arms, and tension. Neck pain is a symptom of many different medical conditions and injuries, so determining the root cause can take some time.

ROOT CAUSES OF NECK PAIN

Oftentimes, neck pain is a result of muscle strain. This may stem from poor posture, including spending too much time hunched over an electronic device. It’s even possible for your sleep posture to affect your neck.

Certain factors of aging may also lead to neck pain. For instance, osteoarthritis (the general wear and tear of joint cartilage), can occur in your neck. Another cause may be spinal stenosis, a condition in which the spaces within your spine become narrower. Ongoing stress and certain repeated movements can also cause discs in the spine to degenerate over time, leading to herniated discs or pinched nerves.

Trauma can also lead to neck pain. While any type of injury or sudden impact could impact your neck, whiplash is an especially common cause. Usually, whiplash happens during an automobile accident, when your spine is abnormally compressed, causing damage to facet joints and intervertebral discs. Although rare, whiplash can also occur during sports and high-impact activities, and even when you’re riding a rollercoaster.

In some cases, even mental or emotional stress can cause neck pain, as it may result in tightening the neck muscles. Overexertion from heavy lifting, repetitive actions, or other strenuous activities can also contribute to your neck discomfort.

HOW DOES NECK PAIN IMPACT THE REST OF YOUR BODY?

Just because it's common doesn't mean neck pain should be ignored. Less frequent causes of neck pain can include cysts, bone spurs, or tumors. Other diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, meningitis, or cancer may also be the source of your pain.

Regardless of the source, back and neck pain are among the most common causes of disability in the working population. It also runs the risk of keeping you more sedentary, making you more susceptible to weight gain, which has its own set of health risks. Debilitating neck pain may even cause depression, since it can interfere with all areas of your life if left unaddressed.

The good news is that you don't have to settle for a life of lasting neck pain. If you're concerned about the intensity or longevity of your pain, reach out to our team at 360-866-7990 to schedule a consultation. Our providers pinpoint the root cause and then use state-of-the-art therapies to deliver real relief.

