

MANAGING WHIPLASH

Background:

Whiplash is a common condition experienced after any type of forceful back and forth motion of the neck, and is typically used to describe the pain experienced after a motor vehicle accident. Most often, whiplash injuries are the result of trauma to the “Soft Tissue”, which includes muscles, ligaments, tendons and disks. Usually it is not necessary to identify which soft tissue is injured, and scans/x-rays are generally not needed to determine how to manage this condition.

Neck and back pain are common after a whiplash injury. Fortunately, the vast majority of people experiencing a whiplash type injury improve relatively quickly. Research shows that most people return to all of their regular activities within a month, although they may still be experiencing some pain.

Facts:

From a treatment perspective, short term use of pain medication in the first weeks post injury may be helpful in bringing your pain down so that you can become more active. Prolonged use of painkillers, however, may actually decrease your threshold for pain resistance and it is generally not recommended.

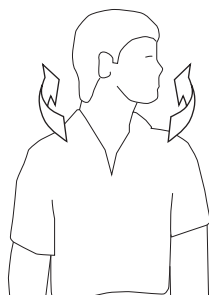
Skilled manual (hands-on) therapy can be beneficial in the short-term. Active treatments are well supported in the research and should definitely be a component of your recovery. Passive treatments such as ultrasound, laser, and bed rest are generally not supported by research.

What you can do:

1. Those individuals who are able to return to work and the activities of daily living that they enjoy recover more quickly. You do not have to be pain free in order to return to work and research suggests that an early return to regular activities, even with pain, speeds recovery.
2. Stay positive about your recovery as attitude is a significant part of the recovery process. It is important to know that people can experience increased stress, altered mood and anxiety after an injury. If these feelings interfere with your ability to function in your day to day activities, speak to your health care provider.
3. Take an active role in your own recovery. Make time to do activities that decrease your pain and stress.
4. Start moving your neck with gentle exercise to help with the healing process.

Exercises:

1. Neck rotation – gently turn your head as far as you feel comfortable to the right and then the left. Repeat 10 times. Perform 2-3 times a day.



2. Neck side flexion – gently bring your ear to your right shoulder and then to the left shoulder. Repeat 10 times. Perform 2-3 times a day.

