



Cervical Whiplash

A Whiplash injury to the cervical (uppermost) region of the spine can result from many types of trauma, the most common being a motor vehicle accident. Injury to the ligaments, muscles, joints, or even the arteries or veins may result. A cervical whiplash injury may cause neck, shoulder, or jaw pain as well as headaches, dizziness and blurred vision.

Treatment initially focuses on decreasing the inflammation and pain in the injured area(s), using modalities such as acupuncture, ice, and interferential electrical current. Range-of-motion exercises will be prescribed early on to prevent muscles and joints from stiffening up. As your treatment progresses strengthening and stabilizing exercises will be added.

The therapeutic modalities commonly used include:

Ultrasound: uses sound waves and may be used to decrease scar tissue, increase blood flow, or decrease pain.

Interferential Current: uses electrical current to decrease pain, can also be used to elicit muscle contraction and decrease swelling.

Acupuncture: uses small, solid needles to encourage healing, reduce pain, and improve function of affected areas of the body.

What can you do at home?

Rest: by decreasing your activity you allow your body a chance to heal itself. When you start to feel better it is important to ease back into activities which might be aggravating. Listen to your body - pain means that you have done too much.

Ice: ice decreases the metabolism of your cells so that they do not die despite a decrease in oxygen to the injured area. Ice should be kept on for approximately 15 minutes, several times a day. The injured area should be elevated (above the level of your heart) at the same time. Use a wet towel between the ice and your skin to protect against frostbite. You can use frozen veggies, cold packs, or real ice.

