

Whiplash Injury

Whiplash is an injury caused by strain to structures of the neck including muscles, tendons, ligaments, bones, joints and nerves. This injury happens when the neck sustains a sudden back-and-forth motion similar to cracking a whip.

Symptoms

Symptoms may be immediate after the injury but commonly present 24 hours after the injury. The pain is often described as aching and stiffness or tightness in the neck and back that increases with movement. You may also feel a sensation of pins and needles in the arms, pain in the shoulders and a headache that starts at the base of the skull. Other symptoms include dizziness, fatigue, ringing in the ears, jaw pain, and visual disturbances.

Causes

The most common cause of whiplash is rear-end motor vehicle accidents. This causes neck extension and flexion beyond the neck's normal range of motion. Tears and strains to internal neck structures cause pain and inflammation. Other causes of whiplash include rollercoaster rides, contact sports, and physical abuse or assault.

Testing

Physical examination is the first step to determine the extent and location of the injury. Your interventional pain physician may order an X-ray, CT scan, or MRI to pinpoint affected structures.

Treatment

Common treatment for whiplash includes

- Rest
- Medications such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications or Muscle relaxers
- Physical Therapy or Massage Therapy
- Trigger Point Injections
- Facet joint blocks
- Radiofrequency ablation