

Whiplash Associated Disorder

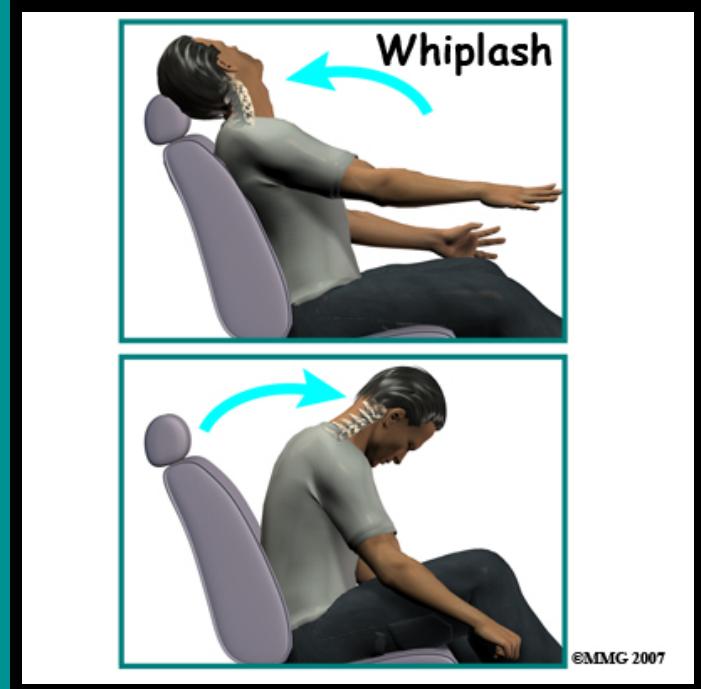


Bourassa & Associates

Rehabilitation Centre

What is Whiplash?

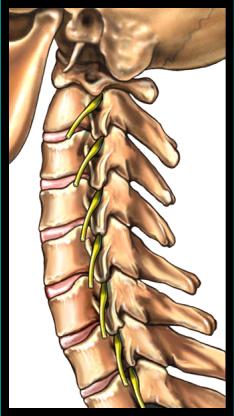
- Whiplash is a non-medical term used to describe neck pain following hyperflexion or hyperextension of the tissues and joints of the neck.
 - Tissues include ligaments, tendons and muscles.
- It is caused by an abnormal motion or force applied to your neck that causes movement beyond the neck's normal range of motion.



When Does WAD Occur?



- The most frequent cause of whiplash is a car accident.
- Other common causes of whiplash include contact sports injuries, blows to the head from a falling object or being assaulted.
- Repetitive stress injuries or chronic strain involving the neck (such as using your neck to hold the phone) are common, non-acute causes.



Grades of Whiplash

Based on Quebec Task Force grades of disorder

GRADE 1

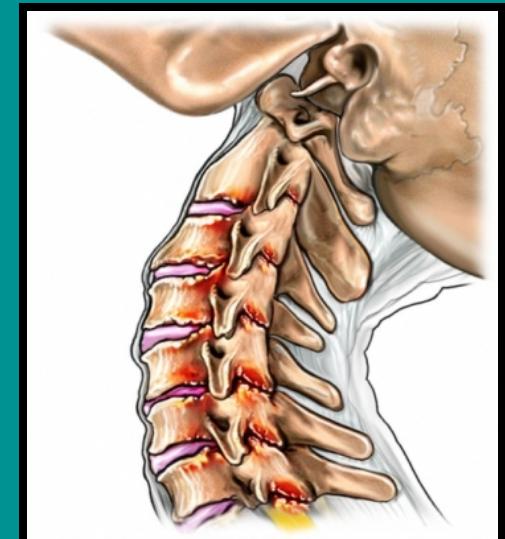
- Complaints of neck pain, stiffness or tenderness
- Range of motion is full and assessing practitioner is not able to illicit pain in the client's neck with general neck testing.

Grades of Whiplash

Based on Quebec Task Force grades of disorder

GRADE 2

- Neck complaints similar to those described in grade 1.
- Plus, the examining practitioner finds decreased range of motion and point tenderness in the neck.





Grades of Whiplash

Based on Quebec Task Force grades of disorder

GRADE 3

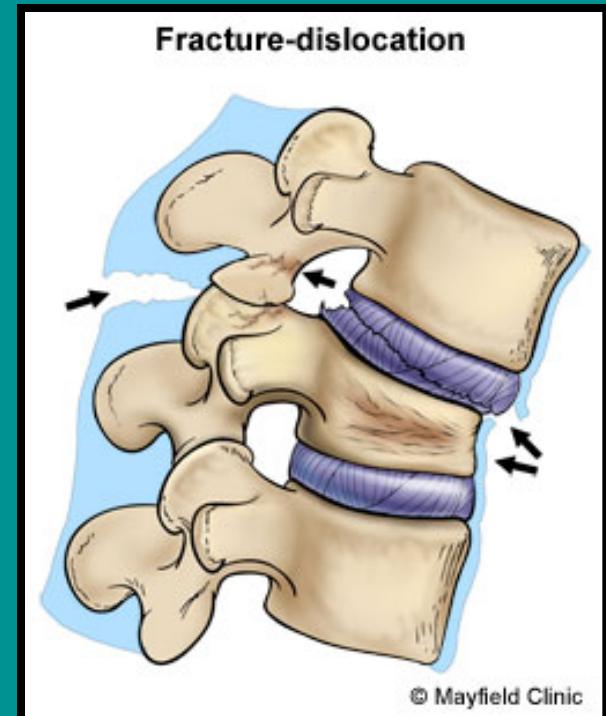
- Decreased range of motion plus neurological signs such as decreased deep tendon reflexes, weakness, insomnia and decreases in sensory input.

Grades of Whiplash

Based on Quebec Task Force grades of disorder

GRADE 4

- Neck complaints as well as fracture, dislocation or injury to the spinal cord.



Signs & Symptoms of Whiplash

- Neck pain
- Tenderness along the back of your neck.
- Muscle spasms (in the side or back of your neck).
- Difficulty moving your head due to neck discomfort.
- Headache
- Pain shooting from your neck into either shoulder or arm.
- Abnormal sensations such as burning or prickling in the arms radiating from the neck.
- Difficulty with swallowing or chewing and hoarseness which could indicate injury to the esophagus and larynx.

Management of Whiplash

- Use of a soft collar is generally not recommended as immobility can lead to an increase in stiffness, discomfort and can slow the healing process.
- Medication- Ibuprofen (Advil) is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication (NSAID) that can be taken to control pain and inflammation.
 - *However, there is recent evidence to suggest that allowing inflammation to occur may be conducive to the overall recovery of tissues.

MD visit - It is never a bad idea to visit your family doctor following a traumatic incident

Treatment

What a physiotherapist can do!

- A short course of spinal mobilization can help in restoring normal movement of the cervical joints to allow for an active therapy program.
- Physical therapy helps to increase circulation, restore range of motion, and promote healing.
 - The use of modalities such as ultrasound and electrical stimulation should only be used in the early stages of treatment to reduce pain and assist in the start of an active therapy program.
 - Physical therapists can also provide you with an appropriate home exercise program.

Prevention of Re-injury

- Whiplash associated disorder can leave the cervical spine at greater risk for re-injury.
- Performance of a home program which consists of appropriate strengthening and stretching exercises is recommended.
 - This will allow for appropriate tissue healing and readiness of those tissues to undertake increased tensile forces which reduces the chances of re-injury or chronic cervical discomfort.
 - Physiotherapists are trained to provide you with this sort of exercise program.

Prevention – Head Rest Position

- **How To Correctly Position Your Car Seat Headrest?**
 - Take someone with you and go out to your car.
 - Sit in your normal seat and see where the headrest lines up with the back of your head.
 - Ask the person with you to adjust the headrest so that the top middle part of the headrest is level with the height of your eyes
 - More often than not it is not in the correct position - you should adjust it and do this everytime you get into someone else's car.
 - Also take a moment to explain to them how to adjust their headrest.
 - <http://www.thewhiplashexperts.co.uk/headrest.html>

THE END