



WHIPLASH

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

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The term Whiplash describes the mechanism of the injury occurring at the neck and does not describe what is wrong. This can be due to a road traffic accident (RTA) or through contact sports for example.

During whiplash the head is thrown rapidly backwards then forwards on the neck. This action causes varying degrees of inflammation and bruising to the soft tissues and joints of the spine. This can result in symptoms of pain, stiffness and muscle spasm felt around the neck and sometimes into the arm. Occasionally you may experience other short lived symptoms such as headaches, arm pain or tingling in the hand.

Symptoms may not occur until a day or two after injury.

HELPING YOURSELF

The key to recovery is early return to normal activity within the first week.

PAIN RELIEF

In addition to any medication prescribed by your GP you may find either an ice pack or heat pack useful:

Apply the ice pack for up to 20 minutes (*i.e. frozen peas, in a damp cloth*). Heat pack up to 20 minutes (*i.e. wheat pack, heat pack*). Use either as often as required.

EXERCISE

Getting movement back is very important. The soft tissues need to be stretched regularly so that normal movement can be regained and maintained.

Initially exercise may be painful but is in no way harmful. It is important that you persevere with them.

POSTURE

Remember to maintain good posture when sitting, driving, reading and standing. Try to avoid slouching.

Exercise your neck regularly whilst at work, particularly if you sit at a desk or use a computer for long periods of your day.

COLLARS

If you are provided with a collar, only use it for 2-3 days.

Prolonged use will result in increased stiffness, pain and muscle weakness and prolong your symptoms.

SLEEPING

Do not use too many pillows. Try to keep your head in line with the rest of your body. Do not sleep without a pillow. If you do not feel you have enough support, try a rolled up towel inside the pillowcase.

FACTS

- 50% of whiplash patients, return to normal activity by 6 weeks after injury.
- 80% recovery fully
- Permanent harm is very rare
- Symptoms reduce with TIME, leading to a good outcome in the long term

For exercises refer to exercise leaflet for simple neck pain



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