



# Chiropractic Care and Your Neck Pain

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Neck pain can have a significant effect on the quality of your life and your ability to get on with daily activities. Neck pain is a common cause of discomfort and disability. It is estimated that more than one-fifth of Canadians may be experiencing neck pain at any time. The chiropractic treatment of neck pain focuses on reducing your pain, restoring the movement in your neck, and improving its strength and function.

The treatment of neck pain by chiropractors is guided by a thorough understanding of the research about different types of treatments, which combinations of treatments are beneficial, and which should be avoided.

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## What to Expect

Your chiropractor will first conduct a physical examination and an assessment to diagnose the cause of your pain. A personalized treatment plan will then be developed that is specific to you. Once the chiropractor has explained the recommended plan of care, you will be asked for your consent to begin treatment.

The Canadian guidelines for chiropractic treatment of neck pain (that is not caused by whiplash) support the following types of research-based treatments:

- Manipulation
- Mobilization
- Clinic and home-based exercise
- Traction
- Ischemic pressure
- Cervical pillows
- Ultra-sound
- Low-power laser
- Massage
- Pulsed electromagnetic therapy
- TENS

Your chiropractor will develop a program of care that may combine more than one type of treatment depending on your personal needs. He or she may also ask for permission to inform your family physician of the care you are receiving to ensure that your chiropractic and medical care are properly coordinated.



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## Participating in Your Health Care

The guidelines for chiropractic treatment of neck pain also provide advice about what to avoid. Your chiropractor is trained to identify warning signs that may indicate you should be referred to another health professional or that your chiropractic treatment should be modified. You can play an active role in your treatment by informing your chiropractor before commencing treatment if you have experienced, or are experiencing, any of the following symptoms:

- Neck pain or pain in the back of the head of a very sharp quality and severe intensity which is sudden and unlike any pain you have ever experienced.
- Severe and persistent headache which is sudden and unlike any previously experienced pain.
- Unusual trouble speaking, swallowing or walking, blurred vision, loss of balance, or difficulty holding an object.

You should also tell your chiropractor if you have experienced trauma such as a fall or blow to the head, if you have smoked, or if you are aware of any injuries or abnormalities of your arteries.

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## Feeling Better

Your chiropractor will likely recommend between two and five treatments a week to begin, and will assess your progress after 10 to 12 visits or sooner, depending on how quickly you improve. Once you are feeling better, you may wish to discuss the role that maintenance or wellness care can play in maintaining the optimal function and health of your spine.