

A Pain in the Neck

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At one time or another, we have all suffered from a real "pain in the neck". This sensation of pain and spasms can be as uncomfortable as any other part of the spine. It is, at times, as irritating as many of the other literal "pains in the neck" that we face throughout life.

Cervical (neck) pain and muscle spasm is most commonly caused by "whiplash" trauma to the neck. These symptoms can be treated with medication and therapy, and generally resolve within a few days to weeks.

More serious conditions occur when the pain: (1) lasts longer than a few weeks, and/or (2) may be accompanied by pain in the arms (radiculopathy) or difficulty with walking or bowel and bladder functions (myelopathy). In either of these situations, it is necessary to obtain an MRI scan, to look at not only the bones of the cervical spine, but also the nerves themselves.

Trauma to the cervical spine can cause fractures of the neck, or result in the disc (the cushions between the neck bones) to slip (or herniate). This could lead to pressure upon the spinal cord or the cervical nerve roots that exit from it. This compression is what leads to the prolonged or addition symptoms that can eventually cause permanent damage to the nerves themselves. In these cases, surgery is necessary to "decompress" these structures.

Arthritis can also lead to many of these same symptoms, of course over a longer period of time. Calcium deposits (or spondylosis, the medical term for this form of arthritis), need be removed in a similar fashion as those seen in more acute injuries.

This is not to say that all "pain in the neck" requires surgery. There are many other options which can be tried. It is important, however, that this decision is made in conjunction with a Neurosurgeon, who is trained to evaluate and perform surgery of the neck. Please contact us at (800) 334-0878, should you wish to make an appointment in our offices in Laughlin, Bullhead City, Kingman, Lake Havasu, and Needles.