

SAFETY BULLETIN – Neck Strain Prevention

What is neck strain?

A strain is a tear of a muscle or tendon. Your neck is surrounded by small muscles running close to the vertebrae and larger muscles that make up the visible muscles of the neck.

How does it occur?

Neck strains most commonly occur when the head and neck are forcibly moved, such as in a whiplash injury.



What are the symptoms?

You literally have a pain in the neck. When these muscles go into spasm you feel hard, tight muscles in your neck that are very tender to the touch. You have pain when you move your head to either side or when you try to move your head up or down.

How long will the effects last?

Most people recover from neck strains in a few days to a few weeks, but some people take longer.

When can I return to activity?

The goal of rehabilitation is to return to your activities as soon as is safely possible. If you return too soon you may worsen your injury, which could lead to permanent damage. Everyone recovers from injury at a different rate. Return to activities will be determined by how soon your neck recovers, not by how many days or weeks it has been since your injury occurred. In general, the longer you have symptoms before you start treatment, the longer it will take to recover.

It is important to rehabilitate your neck and shoulders before going back to full activity. You must have full range of motion of your neck.

How can I prevent neck strain?

Neck strain is best prevented by having strong and supple neck muscles. If you have a job that requires you to be in one position all day, it is very important to take breaks and relax your neck muscles. Below are some tips to help prevent neck strain injuries.

Static Work Position

Avoid working in static positions for prolonged periods; stop frequently to stretch, and contract and relax muscles to increase your blood circulation

Tip: Muscles fatigue faster when they are held in one position for prolonged periods of time.

Work Position

When possible, work should be directly in front of you in a position that facilitates a slightly downward gaze of the eyes and a neutral (straight) neck position

Tip: The work area should not be to the side, or too high or low

Posture

Head aligned over the shoulders avoid jutting the chin forward

Tip: Try and keep the body comfortable and in a natural positions when possible. Take frequent breaks and stretch throughout the day.

Telephone Use

Do not cradle the telephone between your ear and shoulder

Tip: Use a speaker phone or headset.

