

WHERE NECK PAIN BEGINS

Overview

Neck pain is a common problem that can result from poor posture, wear and tear, overuse, or traumatic injury to the cervical spine. Neck pain can last for a few hours or days, or it can be a chronic problem that lasts for weeks or years.

About the Neck

The cervical spinal column is made up of a stack of bones called vertebrae, vertebral discs that act as shock absorbers between the vertebrae, and the spinal cord.

Nerve Roots

Nerve roots travel from the spinal cord out to the shoulders and arms.

Common Causes of Pain

Most causes of neck pain are muscle-related. Muscle tension, cramps and sprains can all cause discomfort. Pain that is not muscle-related may be caused by problems related to the intervertebral discs. Problems such as arthritis, herniated discs, and spinal stenosis can cause the spinal cord or nerve roots to become pinched, resulting in pain in the neck or arms.

Symptoms

Symptoms of disc-related problems can include pain, weakness and numbness in the arms, pain, stiffness and reduced range of motion in the neck and shoulders, problems with coordination and balance, and loss of fine motor skill in the hands.

Treatment

Treatment options for neck pain vary depending on the cause of the pain. Options may include pain relief or anti-inflammatory medications, a cervical collar, physical therapy, steroid injections. If those options are not effective, surgery may be needed to relieve pressure on the nerve root or spinal cord.

