

Dr. Mark Saracino
Board Certified
Chiropractic Neurologist

1150 First Avenue, Suite 120
King of Prussia PA 19406-1341
610 337 3335 voice
610 337 4858 fax
Mark.Saracino1@juno.com
www.DrSaracino.com

Car Accidents Cause Neck Pain

The most common car accident is one where a stopped vehicle is struck from behind by another. The resulting jolt, which may not produce much damage to the vehicles because of improved bumper technology, often causes neck pain to the persons in the stopped vehicle more than the striking vehicle. The people in the striking vehicle see the impact about to occur and can brace themselves before impact which reduces their injuries. Whereby, the people in the stopped vehicle, who have no idea an accident is about to occur, only have the body's natural defenses for protection.

For the driver and passengers waiting at a traffic-light or stop-sign, the movement of the head backward at impact produces most of the neck pain from spinal bone compression. A thin muscle in the front of the neck, one we can see in the mirror if we widen the mouth and say out-loud "EE", named the platysma, contracts to prevent traumatic compression of the bones in the spine at impact. Although it is thin, the muscle spans the bottom of the jaw and runs down to the top of the collar bones, it contracts rapidly and involuntarily to prevent the head from whipping backward excessively when the striking vehicle hits. This instinctual reaction prevents the head from moving backward so much that it tears the muscles in the front of the neck, but results in the pinching of nerves that exit in the back of the neck. The compression of the spinal bones results in muscle spasm and pain.

The muscle spasm, immediately, restricts the motion of the neck and decreases the blood supply to the head. When left untreated for a little as two days, spasm can cause excess repair fibers to accumulate in the muscles resulting in headaches, light-headedness, total-body fatigue and nausea. More severe accidents can pinch nerves which shoot pain into the shoulder and arm. After as little as one month of this untreated irritation weakness and muscle atrophy of the arm results. One can see muscle atrophy, which is the result of chronic nerve irritation to the arm, by comparing the thickness and tone of the muscles between the thumb and index finger, known as the web of the hand, while viewing the back of the hand.

Spasm is when muscles attempt to protect their underlying joints and become tighter than usual. The adhesions that result from untreated spasm can only be removed with careful manipulation and physical therapy of the muscles followed by stretching done by a qualified practitioner. Stretching by a doctor, therapist or oneself should NOT be performed until the spasm is relieved, adhesions broken, range-of-motion restored and specific stretching maneuvers demonstrated.

Chiropractic neurology lends itself well to treating such conditions because of all the nerve involvement and we often do.

Sincerely,

Mark Saracino, DC, DACAN
Diplomat American Chiropractic Academy of Neurology