

Medical Massage Solutions...Did You Know?

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

Whiplash

Healing a Pain in the Neck

Hope Bentley

Getting rear-ended in traffic. Face-planting at the bottom of a ski slope. Tumbling over the handlebars on your bike. Whiplash comes in many forms and can become a long-term problem if not treated correctly. Fortunately, massage and bodywork can address the ache and discomfort that come with whiplash and prevent chronic pain down the road.

Understanding Whiplash

The term "whiplash" came into use in 1928. Doctors will sometimes use "hyperextension injury," to describe it, but "whiplash" is a more visceral account of what has happened to the victim's

Car accidents are the most common causes of whiplash. The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons reported that about 20 percent of people who have been in rear-end collisions later report whiplash symptoms. Whether front to back or side to side, whiplash can affect muscles all the way into the victim's back and arms. The most serious form of whiplash compresses nerves in the neck and cause multiple sprains of the ligaments.

The good news is, serious hyperextension injuries are in the minority, as whiplash usually comes in the less serious version of the injury. "Fortunately, about 95 percent of the time whiplash tends to be more

*"A nurse will always give us hope, an angel with a stethoscope."
~ Carrie Latet*



Whiplash injuries can lead to headache as well as neck, jaw, and back pain.

neck. The neck itself has made a whip-like motion bending first towards and then away from the point of impact. As the head moves rapidly in one direction, the muscles in the neck receive the message to contract. The momentum of the head can cause strain or sprain to the muscles and ligaments in the neck as the head reaches the end of its movement.

superficial damage, like slight muscle strains and tears," says Ben Benjamin, Ph.D., a massage therapist who holds a doctorate in education and sports medicine. But whether the pain is minor soreness or serious discomfort, massage can provide relief and prevent chronic problems in the long run.

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Whiplash Symptoms

The symptoms of whiplash include neck pain and stiffness, headaches, pain in the shoulder or between the shoulder blades (sometimes called "coat hanger pain"), low back pain, and pain or numbness in the arms or extremities.

Often people who suffer whiplash do not feel the effects until two or three days after the injury-causing incident. Benjamin explains that this delayed onset is because it takes time for scar tissue to manifest in the sprained or strained muscles and ligaments. And because scar tissue is more adhesive than regular tissue, people experience it as stiffness in the injured areas.

Whiplash affects primarily the neck, but victims shouldn't ignore the rest of the body. This injury can pull the long muscles on either side of the spine, which reach all the way to the tailbone and can cause discomfort along the way. Discomfort or stiffness in the chest and arms can also be due to whiplash. And headaches may be the result of slowed circulation to the head caused by the swelling in the injury.

Massage Can Help

Any massage that causes a general relaxation of the client's muscles can help relieve muscular pain in common types of whiplash injuries. In addition, massage increases the amount of oxygen that reaches the healing tissues and opens those tissues so they can receive oxygen and nutrients, thus speeding the healing process.

In addition to relaxation massage, specific bodywork methods ease acute whiplash discomfort and help prevent chronic fallout. For example, myofascial approaches restore fluidity to the fascia--normally a slippery tissue that surrounds all the moving parts inside the body--allowing freer movement of muscles and ligaments. Friction-based massage helps break up scar tissue and relieve stiffness. Trigger point therapy works by releasing tension held in tight knots of muscle. And any type of bodywork that stimulates circulation helps ease and prevent headaches.

Finally, the incident that caused the whiplash in the first place, (a car wreck, for instance) can be traumatic. Massage

helps relax a client's psyche as well as their muscles, helping her or him work through the emotional issues induced by the accident.

Because the neck is such a delicate part of the body, it is important to proceed with caution. Benjamin advises waiting a few days after the accident to seek treatment. This allows the initial scar tissue to knit, which is an important part of the healing process. The initial treatment should be extremely gentle, and if there is a chance of a fracture, a concussion, any disc problem or other serious injury, the client should make sure to see a physician first.

Let the Healing Begin

It used to be that physicians would immobilize whiplash injuries with a cervical collar, but now health care professionals advise a more temperate course for their patients.

"I recommend gentle neck movement within your range of motion while lying on a pillow," says Benjamin. Movement may help prolong the benefits of the massage by continuing to circulate blood, oxygen, and nutrients through the healing tissue. "Heat or cold, whichever feels better, can also help," says Benjamin. "Soaking in a hot bath can also be beneficial." Limiting physical activity for a few days and getting plenty of rest in the wake of a whiplash injury is also a good idea.

Whiplash is traumatic and should be addressed soon after the injury to avoid any chronic problems. If you or someone you love is suffering from the repercussions of whiplash, consider a bodywork session to ease the discomfort. Massage can help lessen muscle pain, induce relaxation, and ease the trauma often associated with whiplash. You'll be back to your old self in no time.



Bodywork has an arsenal of methods to treat whiplash injuries for a full recovery.

Keeping Your Back Healthy

Tips to Avoid Lasting Pain

Chances are good that, at some point in your life, you will have back pain. In fact, 70-85 percent of Americans will experience back pain at some point in their lives. But even with those odds, there are still several ways to minimize your risk and give yourself the best chance to live pain-free.

Several factors can cause back pain, including stress, poor posture, bad ergonomics, lack of exercise, arthritis, osteoporosis, a sedentary lifestyle, overexertion, pregnancy, kidney stones, fibromyalgia, excess weight, and more.

With all of these potential causes lurking, it's important to look at behaviors that can help you prevent and avoid back pain before it starts. Here are a few simple healthy back tips from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke:

- Stretch and warm tissues before exercise or other strenuous activities.
- Practice good posture. Avoid

slouching when sitting or standing.

--When standing, keep your weight balanced on both feet.

--Follow good ergonomics in the workplace. When sitting for long periods of time, rest your feet on a foot support. Make sure your chair and work surfaces are at the proper height. Get up and move around in between long sitting stints.

--Avoid high-heeled shoes.

--Watch your weight. Excess weight, especially around the waist, can put undue stress on lower back muscles.

--Exercise. Core strengthening moves, especially, will also benefit your back.

--Don't lift items that are heavier than you can handle. Remember to lift with your knees, not your back. Pull in your stomach muscles, keep your head down and in line with your straight back, and do not twist when lifting.

--Get a massage. Using therapeutic bodywork can melt pain-inducing stress away from your back and the rest of your body.



Massage is a great way to beat back pain.

Massage for Old Injuries

Ancient Injuries Don't Have to Make You Feel Old

Art Riggs

Injuries such as chronic back pain, trick knees, and sticky shoulders are not necessarily something you just have to live with. Massage techniques might hold the key to unlocking this old pain.

Will Massage Help?

The benefits of massage will depend on the extent of the injury, how long ago it occurred, and on the skill of the therapist. Chronic and old injuries often require deeper and more precise treatments with less emphasis on general relaxation and working on the whole body. Massage works best for soft tissue injuries to muscles and tendons and is most effective in releasing adhesions and lengthening muscles that have shortened due to compensatory reactions to the injury. Tight and fibrous muscles not only hurt at the muscle or its tendon, but can also interfere with proper joint

movement and cause pain far away from the original injury.

Therapists who perform such work often have specialized names for their work--such as orthopedic massage, neuromuscular therapy, myofascial release, medical massage, etc.,--but many massage therapists utilize an eclectic approach combining the best of the specialties.

It Works!

A recent Consumer Reports article ran the results of a survey of thousands of its readers and reported that massage was equal to chiropractic care in many areas, including back and neck pain. Massage also ranked significantly higher than some other forms of treatment, such as physical therapy or drugs.

If that nagging injury persists, consider booking a massage. Be sure to discuss the injury with your practitioner: How did you receive the injury? Have you reinjured it? And what exactly are your symptoms? Often, the body compensates in one area to protect another that has been traumatized, and this can create new problems.

Discuss the issues with your massage therapist. (Sometimes just talking about old injuries can play a significant role in the healing process.) Together, the two of you can work to determine a treatment plan.

*"They may
forget your
name but they
will never forget
how you made
them feel."
~ maya angelou*

NATIONAL NURSES WEEK

Background ~

National Nurses Week is celebrated annually from May 6, also known as National Nurses Day, through May 12, the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing.

To show our appreciation, Medical Massage Solutions is offering a 20% discount on your first appointment when you bring in this ad or reference Nurses Week.

Thank you to all of the Nurses who make our lives better. You are truly appreciated!!!

This discount is good through June 30, 2013. Call today to schedule an appointment!

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