

Once whiplash sets in, the pain can become severe. It may begin with a sore neck. This gradually may worsen so that in a month the patient cannot even move his neck. And when the neck pain gets progressively worse, headaches may occur. If the brain is bruised the patient may also experience nausea, numbness and ringing in the ears. Berkson adds that “it’s not uncommon to experience blurred vision or trouble swallowing.”

Dr. Donald Murphy, Rhode Island Spine Center, Pawtucket, RI., explains how the injury can affect the nervous system. “There’s an unusual aspect to whiplash pain because the onset is a sudden bombardment of pain signals rather than a gradual onset. This assault causes a change within the central nervous system. The pain-processing system continues to signal pain, even when the injured tissues have healed.”

THE LEAST LIKELY VICTIMS

When one thinks of whiplash, an adult comes to mind. But according to Dr. Robert Ramirez, Wyoming Medical Center, Philadelphia, PA., young children – especially those prone to falling down a lot – often unknowingly sustain whiplash injuries. “Whiplash can happen so fast,” he says. “Depending on

Dr. Arthur C. Croft, director of The Spine Research Institute of San Diego, a recognized whiplash authority, estimates that as many as 3,000,000 whiplash injuries occur in the USA yearly.

how a child falls on the ground, his or her neck will either hyperextend or hyperflex. A parent won’t see it when the child falls. Between the ages of one and five, the average child falls anywhere from 2,500 to 3,000 times. **Most whiplash injuries are caused by micro traumas which happen on a daily basis that build up over time.”**

DAMAGE CONTROL

Following appropriate tests and x-rays, the goal of chiropractic treatment is to initially relieve the discomfort and restore movement. Ice may help control



the pain, inflammation and muscle spasms while the patient rebuilds strength. A study in *Spine*, indicates that early treatment is most effective in treating whiplash symptoms and that 39

percent of those receiving immediate care and exercises were pain free at a six month follow up.

LONG TERM PROBLEMS

In those patients who wait too long for care, or in more severe instances, whiplash can lead to chronic pain that interferes with daily life. This is why it is crucial to seek help immediately and maintain ongoing chiropractic care.

Recognize the signs of whiplash

- Severe neck pain
- Headaches
- Inflammation
- Tenderness
- Blurred vision
- Trouble swallowing

Preventative tips

- Drive defensively and stay alert.
- Use safety features: Adjust the height and backseat of the head restraint so it extends at least as high as your head’s center of gravity and position it close to the back of the head.
- Wear shoulder and lap belts.
- Take precautions when exercising.
- Maintain chiropractic care.