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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

Information for Patients

Cervical Spondylosis

Physiotherapy Service

This leaflet explains what **cervical spondylosis** is and gives advice on what to do about it.

'Age related', 'degenerative' or 'wear and tear' neck pain are some of the other terms used for cervical spondylosis.

Where is it felt?

Cervical spondylosis symptoms are commonly felt as **neck pain** but you may feel pain and stiffness in the head, shoulders and upper back. Some people will hear and feel a crunching or clicking as they move their neck. Although unpleasant to feel, this does not represent anything serious.



How could it affect me?

The symptoms can be felt more by:

- Neck movements
- Sitting or prolonged awkward positions

It is common to feel pain and stiffness on waking or after prolonged rest that eases again with movement. Cervical spondylosis can affect our ability to carry out daily activities, including work and hobbies. At times the pain can feel severe and for some be ongoing. This can affect our general well-being and mental health.

Why does it happen?

Everyone's joints go through a **normal** cycle of use and repair as we age. Sometimes this leads to a change in the shape and structure of joints and discs and how they move and feel.

Cervical spondylosis symptoms become more common over 50 years of age.

The severity and impact of symptoms is often due to a combination of:

- How we are made (muscles, joints and nerves)
- What we think (thoughts and feelings)
- How fit and healthy we are
- How we move
- What activities we do
- How we do our activities

Is it serious?

Based on the information you have provided, your physiotherapist believes you have cervical spondylosis that is **not** a medical concern.

Neck pain can sometimes be a sign of other medical conditions. Investigations are sometimes needed to rule out other problems but are not needed to confirm cervical spondylosis. The treatment for cervical spondylosis is rarely improved by having x-rays or scans.

If you are not improving or getting worse despite following the advice given, please contact us again.

Will it get better?

A flare up of cervical spondylosis symptoms will normally improve in the first 2 to 8 weeks. It can take some people longer to get back to normal and some describe ongoing problems.

It is important to understand that to recover as best as we can we must build back up our physical and mental health. This can reduce the chance that we will have ongoing neck problems that don't settle. Even though the body and spine is aging it still requires the right amount of activity, exercise and mental stimulation to use it well.

What can I do to help myself?

Continue to carry out the self-help advice on **managing your pain, modifying your activities** and gradually **building up your physical and mental health**. Introduce the further advice and exercises you receive from your physiotherapist. Exercises cause your body to adapt to activity. It's a gradual process. For them to work you will need to stick with them.

- Consider the main factors affecting your situation and work towards improving them
- Consider other pain medication options with a Pharmacist or GP

- Improve physical fitness through activity and exercise (see your exercise sheet)
- Improve your lifestyle (weight, smoking, alcohol, activity, stress)
- Improve your mental health and well-being

What can be done to help me?

Further physiotherapy assessment and treatment may be necessary if the advice provided does not help. You can discuss this further with the physiotherapist. Being actively involved in your health and well-being is still the most important part of your management.

There is a good chance that you will improve if you follow the advice you have been given. If you are not improving despite following the advice, please contact us again for further support.

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg