

This leaflet contains information and advice for people who have ongoing problems following a **neck injury** like whiplash, a trip, fall, or a sports injury.

Where is it felt?

Most pain and stiffness is felt in the **neck, head, shoulders and upper back**. You may have some restricted movement of the neck, arms or upper back. Some people can feel symptoms in the arms and legs and some develop dizziness.



How could it affect me?

Symptoms following a neck injury can be felt more with:

- Neck and arm movements
- Sitting or prolonged awkward positions

Neck injury symptoms can affect our ability to carry out daily activities, including work and hobbies. High levels of pain at the time of the injury, anxiety or stress can mean your symptoms take longer to settle. 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?

An incident such as a whiplash or fall can cause injury to soft tissues such as muscles and ligaments. This is similar to sprains or strains to other areas of the body. The research suggests that anxiety, stress and worrying thoughts can prolong the recovery and promote pain following a neck injury.

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 ongoing neck injury symptoms that are **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 neck pain following a minor injury. In most cases x-rays are not advised and scans are only useful in a small number of people with neck pain with other signs and symptoms.

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

Will it get better?

Most people will make a full recovery within 3 to 6 months. 50 out of 100 people with whiplash injury have reported some ongoing neck pain one year later.

It is important to understand that to recover you should improve your physical and mental health as best as you can. This reduces the chance of having long-standing neck pain.

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**. Try not to worry about your injury as this can delay your recovery. Relaxation techniques and mindfulness can be helpful

What can be done to help me?

Further physiotherapy assessment and treatment may be necessary if you have followed the advice given and it has not helped. Pain relief, reducing anxiety and being actively involved in your health and well-being is still the most important part of your recovery.

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