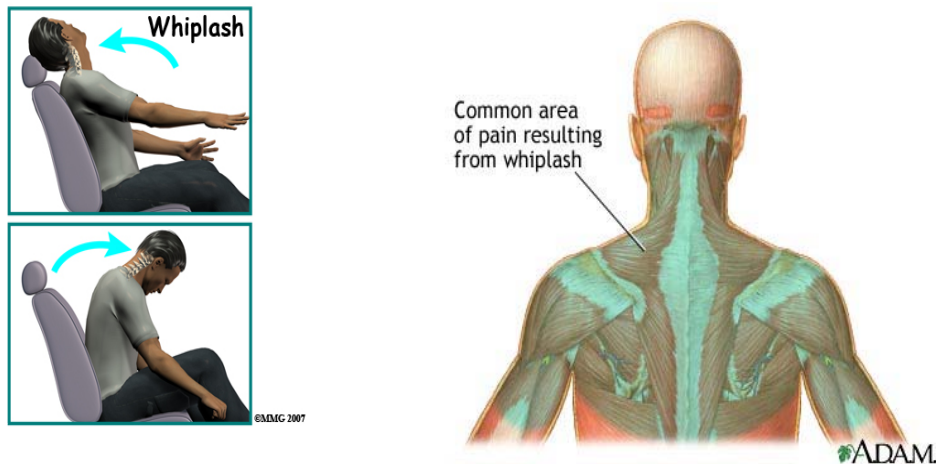


## Whiplash

Whiplash is a nonmedical term used to describe neck pain following an injury to the soft tissues of your neck (specifically ligaments, tendons, and muscles) and may include injury to intervertebral joints, discs, and ligaments, cervical muscles, and nerve roots. It is caused by an abnormal motion or force applied to your neck that causes movement beyond the neck's normal range of motion, from extension to flexion. Whiplash happens in motor vehicle accidents, sporting activities, accidental falls, and assault. There is often injury to the soft tissues in the front and back of the neck due to excessive stretching that occurs in a whiplash.



**Symptoms;** Signs and symptoms may occur immediately or minutes to hours after the initial injury; the sooner after the injury that symptoms develop, the greater the chance of serious damage. They include: neck pain, neck swelling, tenderness along the back of your neck, muscle spasms, difficulty moving your neck, headaches and pain shooting from the neck into shoulder or arm. In addition, some people experience cognitive, somatic, or psychological conditions such as memory loss, concentration impairment, nervousness/irritability, sleep disturbances, fatigue, or depression.

**Treatment;** It is important to see your physician after a whiplash injury. Typically an XRay will be done to rule out injury to the bones in the neck. Treatment for individuals with whiplash may include pain medications, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, antidepressants and muscle relaxants. Physical Therapy treatment for whiplash injuries is aimed to decrease pain, inflammation and muscle spasm with gentle exercises, modalities (such as ultrasound and electrical stimulation) and manual therapy (massage, traction). The use of heat and ice are also helpful to control the symptoms. As symptoms resolve, treatment is aimed to restore mobility, strength and return a patient to their previous level of function

**Outlook;** Generally, prognosis for individuals with whiplash is good. The neck and head pain clears within a few days or weeks. Most patients recover within 3 months after the injury, however, some may continue to have residual neck pain and headaches.

The information on this page is provided to you from Performance Physical Therapy. It is not intended to replace any information/treatment provided to you by your health care provider. If you experience any pain while participating in this exercise, please contact your health care provider. Please feel free to check with your Physical Therapist if you have any questions about the information provided on this page.

We are here to help you reach your Peak Performance!

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