

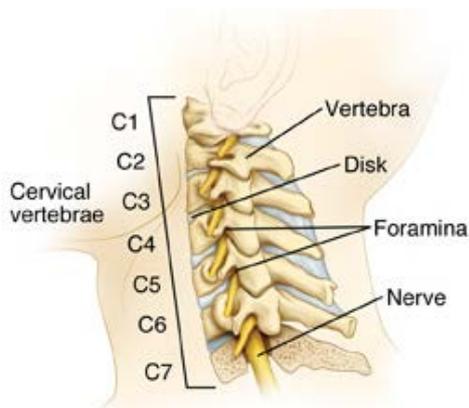
What Causes It?

Neck pain is a common problem, with two-thirds of the population having neck pain at some point in their lives.

It may arise due to joint irritation or muscular tightness in either the neck or upper back, or pinching of the nerves exiting from the spine.

Poor posture, trauma and arthritis are common causes of neck pain. Injuries include whiplash, a wry neck (or torticollis), a number of postural pain syndromes or shoulder injuries such as degenerative tendinosis, fractures and dislocations. Physiotherapy treatments can benefit neck and shoulder pain greatly.

Anatomy



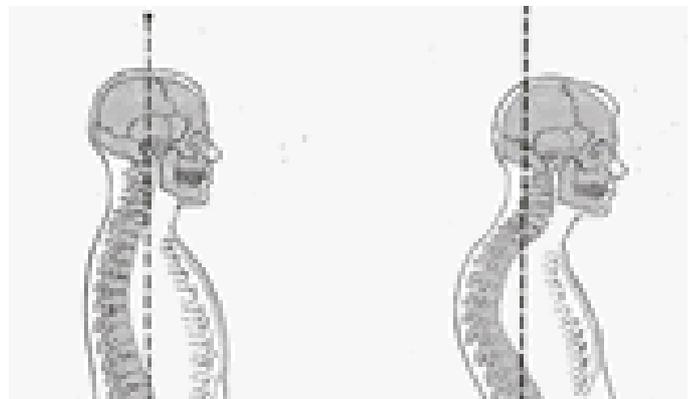
The head is supported by the neck, which is made up of seven bones (vertebrae) stacked one on top of the other.

The vertebrae are cushioned by discs of cartilage and bound together with ligaments. Muscles provide movement and additional support.



The neck is very mobile, which means it is less stable than other areas of the body and more susceptible to injury.

Poor posture can cause neck pain by putting extra strain on ligaments and muscles. Standing with your shoulders slouched and chin poking forward, working with your head down for long periods of time, slumping while seated and sleeping face-down are common postures that can predispose to neck pain.



Physiotherapy Treatment of Neck Pain

Your physiotherapist will always ensure that over your course of treatment 3 very important things happen:

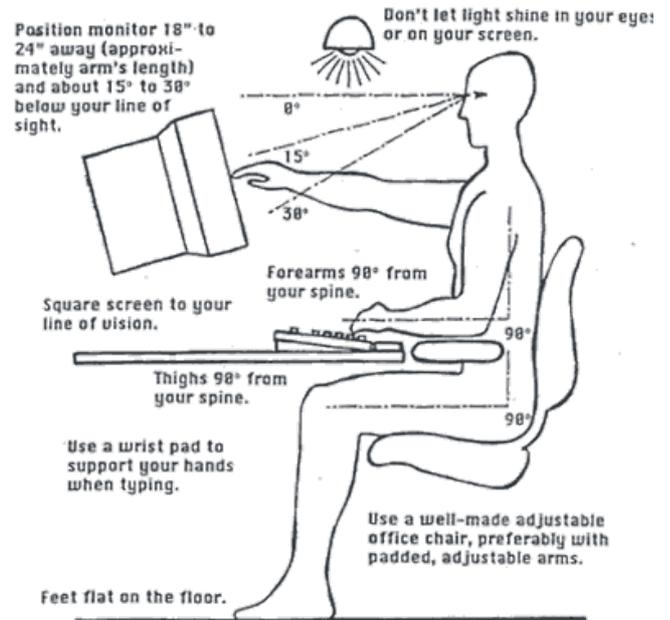
1. **Education:** helping you understand where your pain is coming from and what to do about it
2. **Pain relief:** to settle symptoms and get you back to your normal pain free life
3. **Prevention:** to ensure you know how to reduce risk of recurring problems, and how to effectively self-treat any early symptoms

Treatment depends on the cause, but may include:

- ✦ Soft tissue massage
- ✦ Mobilisation to stretch tight muscles and other soft tissue structures
- ✦ Mobilisation or manipulation of the joint
- ✦ specific exercise programs
- ✦ Taping to stabilise the shoulder joint
- ✦ Practical strategies to correct postural problems
- ✦ Activity modification, for example gym or sporting technique
- ✦ Electrotherapy, heat or ultrasound treatment to assist with short term relief



Prevention of Neck Pain



Prevent posture-related neck pain by ensuring:

- ✦ Correct posture when standing or sitting: adjust your pelvic position, lift your chest gently, nod your chin slightly and relax your shoulders
- ✦ Your workstation is set up to help you sit and work without discomfort
- ✦ Stretch and change position frequently while you are working
- ✦ Try not to sleep on your stomach, which overextends your neck
- ✦ Choose an appropriate pillow for neck support while you sleep. Ask your physiotherapist for more information
- ✦ Combat the muscle-tightening effects of stress with relaxation techniques
- ✦ Exercise regularly to improve muscle tone and posture