

PM&R diagnosis and treatment of neck pain

Some of the treatments and diagnostic techniques used by rehabilitation physicians for neck pain include:

- * medically supervised exercise program
- * medication
- * electrical stimulation/electromyography
- * injections
- * braces/orthotics
- * acupuncture

PM&R treatment is non-surgical. Should a patient require surgery, the rehabilitation physician will coordinate care both before and after surgery for maximum rehabilitation.

The rehabilitation of neck pain problems occurs in three phases

- Phase One:** During the first phase, called the acute phase, rehabilitation physicians treat pain and inflammation.
- Phase Two:** Once your pain has been controlled, you move into the recovery phase. Here, flexibility and strength are developed to help get you back to your daily work, sports, and leisure activities.
- Phase Three:** The goal of the maintenance phase is to minimize recurrence of the problem and to prevent further injury. Patients learn ways to avoid causing the injury again.



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Neck Pain

Relief and rehabilitation



Neck pain. Most people don't usually think much about the space between their head and shoulders until they find themselves with neck pain. After that driving, talking on the phone, and many other everyday activities can become a source of great discomfort.

A visit to a rehabilitation physician, also called a physiatrist, can help people get back to active, pain-free lives. This physician is a specialist in physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R).

Accurate Diagnosis Leads to Management of Pain

It is important to identify the root cause of your neck pain. Rehabilitation physicians have the specialized, multidisciplinary training that enables them to not only accurately diagnose the cause, but tailor a treatment plan to alleviate the pain as well.

By diagnosing and managing neck pain, rehabilitation physicians help patients return to their daily activities.



Whole Care

The PM&R treatment approach emphasizes comprehensive care. Rehabilitation physicians take the whole person into account and treat the patient not just the symptom.

What Kinds of Problems Might Cause Neck Pain?

Neck pain can be triggered by a wide variety of causes including:

- * **Repetitive Strain Injury:** Occurs from a chronically used part of the body, either in a normal or abnormal way. It is often found in people who sit at desks or work at computers for long periods of time.
- * **Radiculopathy:** A pinched nerve usually from a herniated or slipped disk.
- * **Myofascial Pain:** Generally an aching pain in muscles that can come from poor posture, sitting at a computer, or other job-related tasks. Sometimes myofascial pain causes soreness in different parts of the body such as the arms.
- * **Arthritis:** A disease affecting the joints and resulting in stiffness, inflammation, and pain.
- * **Spinal Stenosis:** A narrowing of the nerve openings either around the spinal cord or nerve roots that can cause symptoms similar to a pinched nerve.
- * **Tendon, Ligament, and Soft Tissue Pain:** Localized pain when an area is stretched or its muscles are overused. This results in tenderness.
- * **Spinal Instability:** Increased motion between vertebra, usually resulting from an injury. The pain typically feels like tingling in the neck or arms.

Sometimes, the pain may come from a combination of factors or something not even related to the neck. Examples would be shoulder and elbow injuries and gall bladder disease.

Why PM&R for Neck Pain?

Physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) is a medical specialty dedicated to restoring optimal function for people with injuries or illness. Rehabilitation physicians are specialists in diagnosing and treating problems of the musculoskeletal system. They offer a non-surgical approach to pain and injury, which makes them the ideal choice for neck pain.

After completing medical school, a rehabilitation physician completes an accredited four-year residency program in PM&R. Many rehabilitation physicians also go on to become board certified in the specialty by passing a series of exams.

With their advanced, multidisciplinary training, rehabilitation physicians are experts in examining all aspects of neck pain – they may determine that there are underlying problems in other parts of your body that are causing your neck pain. Most important, rehabilitation physicians have many treatment methods available to reduce or eliminate your problems and to decrease the possibility of a recurrence.

They conduct a thorough exam and collect your medical history to identify the source of your pain, injury, or disability, even when standard diagnostic tests don't find specific problems. In addition, rehabilitation physicians direct your treatment team if you need any other services, such as those of a physical therapist or athletic trainer. The result is a customized treatment program tailored for you.

By evaluating the impact of a condition on the whole person – medically, socially, emotionally, and vocationally – rehabilitation physicians help their patients understand and take control of their health.