

Frequently Asked Questions About Whiplash Injuries

- 1. What is a “whiplash injury?”**

This phrase refers to the tissue damage caused by extremely rapid changes in velocity experienced by the human body, most commonly caused by auto collisions.
- 2. What tissues are commonly injured by whiplash trauma?**

Both hard and soft tissues can be injured by whiplash trauma. Hard tissue injuries include fractures to any of our 206 bones. Soft tissue injuries include lesions to everything else in the human body, from skin bruises to brain injuries. Most commonly injured tissues include: muscles, tendons, ligaments, cartilage, discs, nerves, and joint articulations.
- 3. What are common symptoms of a whiplash?**

Pain and/or stiffness in the neck, back and/or shoulders; headache; pain/weakness/tingling/numbness in the extremities; dizziness/lightheadness; jaw/facial pain; disorientation; difficulty concentrating; loss of sleep; fatigue; and nervousness. Many more symptoms can occur, so patients are encouraged to disclose any symptom arising after the whiplash injury, no matter how unusual it may seem.
- 4. Is chiropractic care effective in treating whiplash injuries?**

Proper chiropractic care is widely considered the most effective treatment for most whiplash injuries. Chiropractic care provides nondrug/nonsurgical relief of symptoms, restores functional loss, and minimizes long-term degenerative problems. For more severe whiplash injuries, medical or other forms of complimentary care may be needed in conjunction with chiropractic care.
- 5. Does chiropractic treatment hurt and is it safe?**

Modern chiropractic is a far cry from the cartoon-like depictions seen on television and in films. Patients are typically surprised at the gentleness of chiropractic treatment and often express immediate relief with this care. Obviously, touching any traumatized area may produce some discomfort, no matter how gentle the contact. But even the most sensitive of patients continue to return for treatment because chiropractic works. This treatment is also far safer than consuming over-the-counter medications and definitely better than doing nothing at all for the whiplash.
- 6. How long will chiropractic treatment last?**

Treatment frequency and duration for whiplash injuries vary considerably, depending upon such factors as the extent of injuries, patient cooperation in the treatment process, and the nature of treatment utilized. Approximately 75% of *uncomplicated* whiplash injuries are released to nonscheduled care within 3-4 months of treatment onset.
- 7. What is expected of the patient to optimize the recovery?**

The degree of success of the chiropractic treatment process depends considerably upon the cooperation of the injured patient. The patient must make every effort to comprehend the nature of his/her whiplash injuries and understand what is required to achieve maximum improvement and why. The patient must allow adequate time for treatment and keep all scheduled appointments. Postural and ergonomic recommendations must be followed and corrective exercises must be performed as directed by the treating chiropractor. Remember, whiplash injuries are far different than other injuries and require specialized care.
- 8. What type of permanent residuals can result from a whiplash injury?**

Patients are usually surprised to learn that, statistically speaking, 45% of whiplash patients treated by medical doctors *never* fully recover. The chiropractic treatment success is far higher, especially when proper treatment is initiated soon after the injury and the patient is highly compliant with all recommendations. Proper chiropractic care addresses the problem at the joint and structural level, and not by merely suppressing symptoms as seen in the medical approach. Therefore, the chiropractic approach represents the closest thing to a true fix of the whiplash injuries. This explains the much higher success rates with this method.
- 9. How can the treatment be paid for?**

If another party caused the whiplash injury, he/she is responsible for payment, either directly or through his/her auto insurance. If the patient has true med pay, this should be billed first. Personal health insurance can also be used, but there are often deductibles and co-pays involved. Sometimes the patient must make arrangements to make payment for services rendered. The staff of the treating chiropractor is well versed in the area of getting reimbursed and can provide invaluable assistance in this area to the injured patient.
- 10. Is an attorney needed to settle a whiplash injury case?**

The answer to this question may depend on how well one can “negotiate” with the insurance company representatives. These multibillion dollar corporations have well trained adjusters, who are rewarded for settling cases for as little as possible. They have legions of well paid attorneys, whose prime concern is preserving their employer’s bottom line and not being fair to the injured party. Most whiplash victims dislike the prolonged negotiating process and prefer to use the services of a first-rate legal expert. **Ask the treating chiropractor for recommendations.**