

Neck Arthritis

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Situation: *Neck arthritis* is a relatively common condition, particular with older people, involving the deterioration of the joints connecting the seven cervical vertebrae that comprise the neck. The spinal column is made up of thirty-three bones called vertebrae each of which has a large hole in its centre. Because these bones are situated on top of each other, their holes line up, forming the spinal canal. This canal provides protection and space for the spinal cord and nerves to travel from the brain to the rest of the body. Each vertebra connects with the vertebra above and below via two types of joints: the facet joints on either side of the spine and the disc which separates each vertebra. *Neck arthritis* may cause a variety of symptoms such as pain and stiffness in the neck.

Causes: Over time, wear and tear to the discs, joints, and bones can occur resulting in degenerative changes to the spine. These degenerative changes may include decreased disc height, loss of joint cartilage, development of bone spurs, and a thickening of the bones. As *neck arthritis* progresses, the spinal canal can begin to narrow and may eventually place pressure on the spinal cord and nerves.

Symptoms: Many people with *neck arthritis* experience pain and stiffness in the neck and a reduced range of movement of their neck. In more severe cases involving spinal cord or nerve compression, pain, pins and needles, weakness or numbness may be experienced in the neck, upper back, shoulders, arms or hands. Occasionally, headaches can also occur.

Treatment: While little can be done to reverse the degenerative changes associated with *neck arthritis*, people can often remain active by modifying their activities appropriately and undergoing a rehabilitation program. Symptoms tend to ease when lying down in good posture or upon applying warmth to the neck. Pain relief options can include chiropractic care, acupuncture, physical therapy, and massage therapy. The chiropractor will diagnose your condition and determine what type of treatments and modalities are appropriate for you.