

T4 Syndrome

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Situation: *T4 Syndrome* refers specifically to an injury to the facet joints and discs of your back at the T-4 level. Your upper back, what medical professionals refer to as the thoracic spine, is made up of twelve bones known as vertebrae that extend horizontally from the top of the upper back to the bottom of the upper back. The twelve vertebrae are numbered T-1 through T-12, starting from the top down. The discs provide a cushion between the vertebrae and the facet joints connect each vertebrae to the one above and the one below it. The facet joints stabilize the vertebrae, while at the same time allowing you to bend and twist. When excessive stretching or compressing forces are placed on the discs and facet joints at the T-4 level, damage to the adjacent nerves can result.

Causes: T-4 syndrome typically occurs when an injury to the facet joints or disc at T-4 affects the nerve root at that level. Injury to these structures can occur during excessive bending, lifting, arching, or twisting movements or due to poor posture. This may occur traumatically or due to repetitive or prolonged forces

Symptoms: Patients with T-4 syndrome usually experience diffuse arm pain and sensory symptoms such as pins and needles or numbness in the upper arm. Pain may also be felt in the upper back; occasionally, the neck may be affected.

Symptoms may develop suddenly during the activity that causes the injury . . . or you may experience pain and stiffness later, especially the next morning. Muscle spasms, stiffness, and restricted spinal movement may occur when twisting, lifting, arching backwards, bending, sitting for prolonged periods of time, coughing or sneezing, or performing activities that involve using the hands in front of the body.

Treatment: The chiropractor will diagnose T4 Syndrome and determine what type of treatments and modalities are appropriate for you. Occasionally, diagnostic tools like an X-ray, MRI or CT scan may be required. Treatment options can include chiropractic care, acupuncture, physical therapy, and massage therapy ease.