

# Health News ...

## Auto Injuries

With all the snow and ice storms that we have had this winter, I would like to spend some time talking about auto injuries.



Symptoms from an auto accident may not appear for days, weeks or even months after the accident. Although the rear end type of accidents represent only 20% of motor vehicle accidents, it causes over 80% of the injuries giving long term and persistent symptoms. A surprised accident victim does not have a chance to brace for impact, which can result in a more serious injury to the spine and nervous system. An older victim will generally suffer a more serious injury because of the decreased elasticity, dramatic loss of flexibility and strength, and slowing of the natural healing rate. In general, a woman's lighter musculature means that she will have a higher incident of injury. In a typical collision, having the head turned to one side such as when talking to another passenger, can dramatically increase the amount of neck injury.

A whiplash injury occurs when the neck and head are thrown very quickly in one direction and then rebounds in the opposite direction. Because the second, snapping motion happens faster than the spinal structure can recover, the muscles, ligaments and bones in the neck are often damaged. This type of injury can also occur in diving accidents and hard falls. The greatest amount of injury in a typical rear-end collision is from the shifting about of the victim's spine. The more the vehicle is accelerated and propelled forward, the more "whipping" action occurs. Studies indicate that injury can occur at impact speeds of 8 mph where there is little or even no damage to the car. In accidents where there is little damage to the car,

the human spine absorbs the energy, and the head can receive up to 2 1/2 times more force than the car itself. When the head is turned (if you are looking to the right or left) the injury is more severe.

Many times, severe whiplash can be detected immediately after a collision. However, a whiplash injury may take hours, weeks, months, or even years before symptoms are noticed. This is due to the bleeding and formation of scar tissue that occurs in the deep soft tissues and ligaments that surround the spine and injured area. Sometimes whiplash pain can appear at the time of injury, and then decrease as time goes by. Later severe symptoms can occur when excessive stress is placed on the spine, signaling an untreated whiplash injury. This is often due to an injured and unstable spinal ligament, most often the posterior longitudinal ligament, which runs down the back of the spine. The most obvious symptom of whiplash is neck and shoulder pain. Other symptoms may include headaches, dizziness, stiffness, nausea, numbness and tingling in the arms and hands, weakness, swelling, blurred vision and back and chest pain.

Treatment of a whiplash injury involves correction of the spinal structure with gentle Chiropractic care to remove nerve pressure and re-align the injured vertebrae. Other treatments may involve therapies to relax muscle spasms and therapeutic exercises to strengthen injured muscles.

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