

month later and say, 'I can't move my neck.' So it will seem like the pain occurs overnight, but the injury was from four or five weeks prior."

While neck pain is the biggest symptom of whiplash, sufferers may also experience headaches." The neck pain will radiate into the head causing people to have headaches," says Berkson. "You also can experience blurred vision, or trouble swallowing."

### A WIDE RANGE OF DAMAGE

Chiropractors say that not every case of whiplash includes a subluxation. "In many cases, we're actually dealing more with damage to the soft tissues themselves," says Dr. K. Andrew Shepherd, a chiropractor with a private practice, Mountain Health Chiropractic and Wellness, in Plano, TX. "A less severe form of whiplash is where you'll see the muscles themselves causing some edema and splinting. A slightly more severe form of whiplash will involve the surrounding ligaments and tendons, where you have some tearing of all of those fibers." The most severe form of whiplash is where you have subluxation or a physical break of the vertebra, he says. **"Research has shown that if you're involved in whiplash injury, such as a car accident going over 10 miles an hour, it's the same force as a 20 pound bag falling from a building onto your head," says Shepherd, who warns that untreated whiplash can lead to osteoarthritis degeneration.**

### TREATMENT

To treat whiplash, chiropractors will typically take X-rays of the neck to determine the extent of the injury. Often, chiropractors will administer cold laser technology, which can help heal the soft issue injury, says Shepherd. "Cold laser is phenomenal for being able to take out a lot of the muscle spasm that people experience with whiplash," Shepherd says. "This will help determine whether to use an instrument or manual



adjusting. Sometimes, you may just do physical therapy and rehabilitation for the first few visits before you can start to do some chiropractic manipulation."

The area of the body where adjustments will be administered varies from person to person. "As a wellness chiropractor, I take into account the whole body when adjusting," says Shepherd.

### MOVEMENT IS ESSENTIAL

Stretching can help ease discomfort caused by whiplash. "I suggest easy stretches early on for whiplash," says Berkson. "I will have the patient flex their neck laterally to the left, and then go back to the right, and flex their chin to their chest. It's important to keep movement going."

Once the inflammation has healed, chiropractors recommend exercises that reinforce the natural curvature of the spine, says Dr. David Revivo, a chiropractor with a private practice, Cardiff Family Chiropractic, in Cardiff

By The Sea, CA. "Extension exercises, where you hang your head back, are key," he says. "I often have people lie on their back on a bed, and hang their head over to allow gravity to traction their spine, and remove pressure on the nerve."

### CONTINUED CARE

Whiplash sufferers also need to maintain chiropractic adjustments, which are essential to good spinal health. "A chiropractic lifestyle offers a balance that pays close attention to diet, exercise, and is centered around a regiment of regular adjustments," says Revivo. "This is important for your spine, which is like any other tissue in your body, it learns and remembers.

**When you create a state of balance in the spine by correcting the misalignment, it makes sense to maintain that state of balance on some sort of regularity. Plus, if you're living the chiropractic lifestyle going into an injury, like whiplash, the odds of you suffering are less."**

### Whiplash Symptoms

Severe Neck Pain  
Headache  
Inflammation  
Tenderness  
Blurred Vision  
Trouble Swallowing

### Minimize Neck Injury

**While chiropractors say little can be done to prevent whiplash, the following steps can minimize injury to your neck if whiplash occurs:**

- Wear a seat belt at all times.
- Use the headrest in the car.
- Maintain a chiropractic lifestyle of regular adjustments.