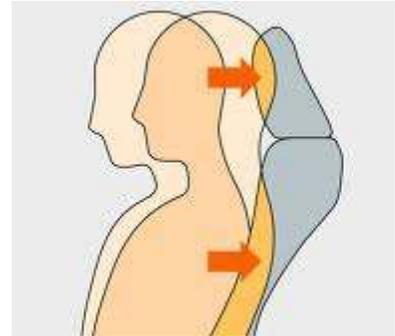


TREATMENT AND PREVENTION OF WHIPLASH INJURIES

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The unique forces generated during a motor vehicle collision (MVC) cause more than 100,000 whiplash cases in Canada each year. This article will specifically focus on the treatment and prevention of whiplash injuries.

The term **WAD** (**Whiplash Associated Disorder**) is used to describe a range of injuries that can be attributed to whiplash. This may include: neck pain, whole body muscle pain/ache, jaw pain, referred arm pain, shoulder or other joint pain, mid back pain, low back pain, headaches, dizziness, and tinnitus.



WAD Grades 1 and 2 represent the majority of whiplash cases and are amenable to conservative management. Early treatment and consultation can greatly improve the recovery process and prevent future complications and chronic pain. Effective treatment strategies may include: pain controlling modalities such as electrotherapy and acupuncture to help facilitate and promote activity and functioning; manual and soft tissue therapy to assist in the healing of injured tissues; education on how to safely re-integrate into activities of daily living; and rehabilitative exercises that may include range of motion, flexibility, strengthening, and balance/coordination training. An independent home exercise program should also be provided.

The goal of treatment is to get the injured individual back on their feet and up to their normal level of activity. The majority of people with **WAD** Grades 1 and 2 experience no significant disruption to their normal activities of daily living. Some may experience a temporary disruption to their normal activities, but usually improve after a few days or weeks. Occasionally, symptoms may persist over a longer period of time. A return to normal activities of daily living may be assisted by active treatment and rehabilitative exercise prescription as described above.

Included below are some tips that may help prevent a MVC and/or whiplash injury (courtesy of the Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors):

1. Drive defensively. Always anticipate the actions of other drivers.
2. Wear your seatbelt at all times.
3. Make sure your headrest is positioned properly, that is, the top of the headrest should be no lower than the top of your ear. If more than one driver uses the car, remind each other to always check the headrest height.
4. Never operate cell phones or other electronic equipment while driving.
5. When road conditions are poor (i.e. icy, wet, dark, or crowded), slow down accordingly.
6. Be sure your car is always in good working order, particularly your brakes, tail lights, headlights, and directional signals.
7. Engage in regular physical activity consisting of cardiovascular, strength, and flexibility training. This will help keep your body strong and offer some protection in the event you are involved in a MVC.



If a whiplash injury is interfering with your activities of daily living, consider chiropractic care. A chiropractor can prescribe appropriate conservative therapy, rehabilitation and self-management strategies specifically for you. For more information, visit www.nhwc.ca.

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