

Whiplash?

by William R. Mayer, BS DC PA

"Dr. Mayer, I was recently involved in an auto accident, where I was hit from behind. I developed a lot of neck pain and stiffness over the next few days. I went to my doctor; he said I had "whiplash." He put a cervical collar on me and gave me some painkillers, muscle relaxants and anti-inflammatory drugs. Then he said to check back in two weeks if it was not better. The pain is still there and I'm not getting any better. What could a chiropractor do for me?"

This question is asked of me nearly every week in my office. Whiplash is one of the most common types of injuries in an auto rear-end type of accident. In this type of accident, the body

is thrown forward but the head is thrown backwards, then the head is whipped forward, hence the term "whiplash." Usually the head is rotated a little to the right or left and this complicates the effects of the injury. Some of the worst injuries occur when a car is hit from the side and the majority of the force through the neck is side to side. Then the various facts of the accident such as speeds involved, size of the cars, use of seat belts and headrest

are all important.

The effects of a whiplash-type of injury may be felt right away. Common symptoms may include neck or shoulder pain, headaches, dizziness, etc. However, it is common to feel few or no symptoms at the time of the accident. It is very common to feel symptoms start hours, days or even weeks later. This is usually due to the effects of inflammation. It is very important to take these symptoms seriously; it means something is wrong! In the most severe type of injury, there may be bone fracture, paralysis and death.

In any car accident, it is first important to make sure there are no life-threatening injuries. Broken bones, bleeding, shock, etc. are best treated by our local emergency people. We are all

very fortunate to live in an area where the trauma specialists from the fire departments and the hospitals are some of the best in the world. However, once an accident victim is released from the hospital, it is very important for them to have their spine checked for damage.

Whiplash trauma usually causes spinal subluxations (misalignment). This results in nerve interference that involves the disc, ligaments and muscles. No amount of pain-

killers, muscle relaxers, anti-inflammatories or physical therapy can realign the vertebrae and relieve the pressure on the nervous system. What is needed is a chiropractic adjustment to restore the normal alignment of the spinal column.

Many people have been in a previous accident or a number of accidents, yet now have no symptoms. It is still important to have your spine checked and the sooner the better. Once the damage is done, the spine will degenerate and may result in disc damage and arthritis, if not treated properly.

In conclusion, it is very important to be seen by a chiropractor as soon as possible, after any type of car accident. Recent re-

search has shown that proper chiropractic care is the fastest road to recovery from the effects of whiplash. It is also the best way to manage the effects of the car accident on a long-term basis.

If any of my readers have been in a recent car accident or know of someone who has, please have them contact me. We are here to help.

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