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What is Whiplash injury?

Whiplash injury typically arises when a motor vehicle is struck from behind causing the occupant's neck to be thrown forcibly backward and then forward. The injury causes damage to muscles, ligaments and joints and may also result in injury to the spinal nerves. Whiplash injury can also arise from other circumstances such as collisions in contact sports.

What are the symptoms?

Whiplash injury causes neck pain and stiffness. Depending on the severity of the injury symptoms could also include headache, shoulder or upper back pain, dizziness, numbness or pins and needles in the shoulders or arms, loss of strength in the arms, fatigue, sleep disturbances, blurred vision, double vision, difficulty with concentration or memory loss.

How is it treated?

Initially, treatment includes the application of ice, rest, immobilisation and massage. Modalities such as laser and ultrasound may also be used. As the condition improves, joint manipulation, mobilisation, exercises and stretches can be added. In some patients, medication for pain and inflammation control may be necessary. Hospitalization is required in severe cases involving fracture or dislocation.

What can I do?

- Follow the advice given to you by your practitioner.
- Perform your prescribed exercises daily within your pain tolerance.
- Stop the exercises if they worsen your symptoms and inform your practitioner so that your exercise plan can be modified.
- Avoid any aggravating activities.

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