

# Chiropractic care can treat most neck pain

**By Dr. Brent Wells  
Better Health Pain and  
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Reading. Driving. Lifting. Turning your head. It's easy to take these movements for granted until something – like neck pain – happens to make them painful or even impossible.

And many of us suffer from neck pain – it's the eighth most common reason people visit their doctor and is one of the leading causes of disability today, costing up to \$80 billion per year in treatment and lost wages. Plus, it's estimated about 70 percent of us will suffer from neck pain at some point in our lives.

Neck pain can be caused by several factors, including whiplash, herniated or bulging discs, degenerating discs, arthritis, neck strains and tension headaches.

Vehicle accidents are the number one cause of neck pain and injury. And it doesn't have to be a major accident or even cause damage to the vehicle – most injuries occur at 6 to 12 mph and crash tests have shown the neck can be injured at speeds as low as 5 mph.

But it doesn't take an accident to injure your neck. As we get older and reduce our physical activity, our spines, particularly our neck areas, become weaker, less flexible, less elastic and more prone to injury.

### A little bit about your spine

Your spine is composed of 24 movable bones called vertebrae.

The seven located in your neck are called the cervical vertebrae. Each vertebra is separated by a disc, a small cartilage pad with a soft, jelly-like center.

Their primary job is to act as spacers and shock absorbers. When healthy, these discs are flexible and allow normal, pain-free movement. When unhealthy, they become hard, stiff and can crack easily.

Your vertebrae are also surrounded by ligaments, which are muscles connecting one bone to the next.

### Common neck problems

If a disc loses its normal motion and position, it can begin to tear, bulge, or degenerate. The problems are often made worse by the fact that discs have very poor blood supply and, once injured, have a difficult time healing without treatment.

And when the ligaments are torn by an injury, or stretched over a long period of time, a sprain occurs. Most people are familiar with ankle sprains, but don't realize they can sprain their neck as well!

When these areas are injured – or just begin to wear out – problems can occur. Some of the most common problems include:

**Sprained ligaments** – When severe enough, sprained ligaments can allow the vertebrae to move more than they should, causing a condition called "instability." If left untreated, instability can cause the spine to develop arthritis up to six times faster than normal.

**Herniated or bulging discs** – These are caused when the material in the middle of a disc ruptures or pushes to one side. This can put extreme pressure on the spinal cord and nerves, interfering with their function and resulting in neck pain, back pain, and pain, numbness or tingling in the arms or legs.

**Disc degeneration** – Healthy discs are flexible, like a moist sponge. However, injuries can cause small tears in the disc, causing it to leak fluid and wear thin. Ultimately, the vertebrae on either side of the disc begin to rub together, becoming rough, worn down – or even fuse together.

**Subluxations** – Most ligament and disc problems will be accompanied by a condition called subluxation. This is when one or more vertebrae become "misaligned" or "stuck." If a vertebrae remains out of place, the body may begin to fuse the bones together, much like it would attempt to fuse a broken arm or leg bone.

### So what can we do about neck pain?

Although some neck conditions may require surgery, most can be treated with non-invasive chiropractic care, which is currently the most widely practiced type of complementary medicine. Last year, approximately 30 million Americans sought chiropractic care – a number that has doubled over the past 15 years. Physical therapy is also a very beneficial form of treatment for neck pain.

Chiropractors are experts in the care of bones, nerves, muscles

and connective tissues that make up about 60 percent of your body. Primarily, chiropractors diagnose, locate, and treat problems with the spine, but they also evaluate and treat all of the major muscles, ligaments and joints of the rest of the body.

A very successful neck pain treatment is the safe, effective, non-surgical Multi-Cervical Unit (MCU) therapy. The MCU, available exclusively in Alaska at Better Health Pain and Wellness Centers, succeeds in treating neck pain where other therapies have failed because it emphasizes the restoration of neck movement and strength.

Studies have shown that after MCU therapy:

- Pain levels were reduced by 66 percent
- Strength levels improved by nearly 72 percent
- And more than 90 percent of MCU patients made a full recovery!

In an MCU session, the patient sits upright in the unit. A head brace facilitates movement, allowing the therapist to effectively diagnose and treat the injured areas. A dynamometer measures strength, a specialized computer system provides real-time data, and a weight stack provides for safe, controlled strength training and rehabilitation.

After treatment, patients can see many benefits including:

- Decreased neck pain
- Improved daily function
- Improved range of motion
- Improved neck strength
- Maintenance of health/strength gains
- Long-term results
- Reduced chance of re-injury

Better Health Pain and Wellness Centers' MCU patients are seeing these benefits first-hand.

"I've had chronic neck pain for many years and I found the MCU and its exercise routine to be very beneficial. MCU has helped me to increase my strength and control my pain," Larry Faber, a Better Health Pain and Wellness Centers patient, said.

Used in combination with chiropractic care and physical therapy, MCU therapy helps patients get back to everyday life with significantly reduced pain.

### Beyond neck pain

Chiropractic care can help with many other conditions beyond neck pain, such as:

- Arthritis
- Back pain
- Bursitis
- Degenerated discs
- Disc herniation, protrusion, bulges
- Fibromyalgia
- Headaches/migraines
- Hip/leg pain
- Joint pain
- Muscle imbalance/weakness
- Post-surgical cases
- Posture problems
- Sciatica
- Scoliosis
- Whiplash injuries

Plus, because chiropractic care is personal and designed specifically for the individual, treatment is available for all ages and physical conditions.

### Better Health Pain and Wellness Centers

At Better Health Pain and Wellness Centers, it is their goal to help you live a healthy, active, pain-free life. When you are injured, they're there to help you heal. And when you're healthy, they'll help you stay that way.

Dr. Brent Wells, chiropractic physician and clinic director, opened Better Health Pain and Wellness Centers in 1998, after seeing the need for a multidisciplinary clinic where patients could receive a full range of effective, conservative treatments from an experienced, friendly staff in a comfortable, compassionate environment.

Since opening their doors, Dr. Wells and his talented and knowledgeable staff have treated thousands of Alaskans. They've also introduced many advanced

technologies to Alaska, including the DRS System for low back pain and MCU Therapy for neck pain.

The Better Health Pain and Wellness Centers difference is a multi-disciplinary approach to treating neck pain and other conditions: Chiropractic care for reducing pain, correcting spinal position and improving joint and disc health; Physical therapy for improving strength and range of motion; Massage therapy for reducing muscular pain and problems; and the MCU neck pain therapy for complete neck rehabilitation.

Better Health Pain and Wellness Centers are open 8am to 7pm weekdays and has convenient locations in Anchorage. If you are suffering from neck pain or another condition, call 907-346-5255 or learn more at [www.bhpw.com](http://www.bhpw.com).

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