

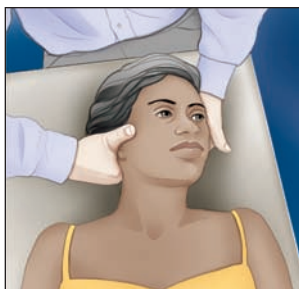
Neck Pain

Manipulation of Your Neck and Upper Back Leads to Quicker Recovery

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Neck pain is very common and fortunately resolves quickly in most individuals. However, in certain cases neck pain can last longer and result in chronic pain, limited neck motion, and disability. In fact, chronic neck pain is the second leading cause of workers' compensation claims in the United States. Treatments that can quickly reduce pain, increase motion, and improve the ability of the muscles to protect the neck may help decrease long-term disability associ-

ated with neck pain. A variety of manual therapy treatments are currently used to manage neck pain. These treatments include mobilization, which slowly and repeatedly moves the neck joints and muscles, and manipulation, which delivers a single, small, quick movement to the joints and muscles. A research report published in the January 2012 issue of *JOSPT* examines the outcomes of these 2 treatment methods and draws conclusions about which one is best.



UPPER BACK AND NECK MANIPULATIONS.

The drawings to the left and below show how a therapist would treat your neck pain using 2 upper back and upper neck manipulation techniques.



NEW INSIGHTS

In this study, researchers treated 107 patients. About half of these patients received a manipulation of the neck, on the part closest to the head, and of the upper back. The other patients received manual therapy that mobilized the spine without using manipulation. After 48 hours, the patients who received the manipulation treatment experienced a 58% decrease in pain and a 50% decrease in disability. By contrast, patients who received the mobilization treatment only had a 13% decrease in pain and actually showed a 13% increase in disability. In addition, the patients who received the manipulation had increased motion and improved control of their neck muscles compared to the patients in the mobilization group. The researchers concluded that the combination of upper neck and back manipulation was more effective in the first 48 hours of treatment than the mobilization treatment.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

Patients with typical neck pain may benefit from a physical therapy program that includes upper neck and upper back manipulation. Potential benefits include less pain, better neck motion, and improved ability to perform daily activities. Although this treatment was very successful for this group of patients with neck pain, it may not be effective or even appropriate for all patients with neck pain. Your physical therapist can perform a thorough evaluation to help determine if you are a good candidate for this treatment, as part of a program designed to help get rid of the aching in your neck. The benefits in this study were only measured for the first 48 hours after treatment; further research is needed to determine long-term benefits. For more information on the treatment of neck pain, contact a physical therapist who specializes in musculoskeletal disorders.

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This *JOSPT* Perspectives for Patients is based on an article by Dunning JR et al, titled "Upper Cervical and Upper Thoracic Thrust Manipulation Versus Non-Thrust Mobilization in Patients With Mechanical Neck Pain: A Multi-Center Randomized Clinical Trial" (*J Orthop Sports Phys Ther* 2012;42(1):5-18. doi:10.2519/jospt.2012.3894)

This Perspectives article was written by a team of *JOSPT*'s editorial board and staff, with Deydre S. Teyhen, PT, PhD, Editor, and Jeanne Robertson, Illustrator.



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