



Does Stress Cause Neck Pain?

Does stress cause neck pain? The short answer is no! At OSR Physical Therapy, we like to say "contributes to" instead of "cause." The casual way healthcare professionals throw around terms can lead to confusion and, worse still, ineffective treatment. Fortunately, our highly skilled therapists know how to dig deep and find the root cause of your neck pain, and this information helps you find relief!

Let's discuss Nicole, a 40-something-year-old working mother of three. Nicole was used to being very active, balancing her work schedule with getting her kids to all the various activities and school functions that come with being a mom nowadays.

Her neck pain first started as a crick in the neck when she woke up one morning. As the day progressed from driving her kids around to sitting at her desk, she noticed turning her head became more difficult and painful, making focusing on work nearly impossible.

Nicole struggled to figure out why her neck started hurting and came to the conclusion that stress "must be" the culprit. The more pain and difficulty moving she had, the more convinced she was that stress was to blame.

Understanding Nicole's Neck Pain

One of the most common things we hear from our patients is that their pain started for "no apparent reason." Like Nicole, people

will wake up with a crick in their neck or notice a stiffness turning when driving in the car. It is also common for people to notice tightness in their upper back and neck after a long day.

So, what is actually the source of the pain? In most cases, there is an issue with the neck joints or the neck muscles due to prolonged positions. Our neck joints don't like remaining in any position for extended periods. In Nicole's case, she first noticed her pain in the morning, which may have been related to her neck position while sleeping. It is also important to note that in Nicole's case, the first sign of any issue was in the morning when she woke up, unrelated to stress.

As Nicole's day progressed, her pain got worse. But this also was more likely related to how she held her neck while driving or sitting at her computer. In both cases, her posture, specifically how she held her neck, seems to have contributed to her pain. Prolonged sitting can lead to a forward head position, resulting in tension to soft tissue (i.e., muscles, tendons, and ligaments) or negative changes to our blood flow.

The muscles of our neck function best when we move them. So, holding her head in one position likely led to irritation of the muscles and affected her ability to move her neck, which in turn caused stress.

Stress "contributes" to neck pain because, when we experience stress, our bodies naturally respond by tensing up as a protective measure. This tension can lead to discomfort, particularly in the neck and upper back region. Research studies have found that individuals with higher stress levels reported increased neck pain as compared to those with lower stress levels. This is why we say "contributes" to, but not the cause of, neck pain.



We Can Help you Heal.
Call 1.480.360.3921 Today!

How Physical Therapy Can Help Alleviate Neck Pain

We will target the source of your pain by performing a thorough examination, starting with your medical history and details about how, when, and where your symptoms began. As we saw with Nicole, determining how, when, and why the pain started helps us eliminate possibilities and get to the actual root cause(s).

Our therapists will also analyze your posture and movement to identify any limitations or restrictions contributing to your condition. We'll use this information to design a program that addresses your specific needs.

Our treatment plans focus on relieving your pain and improving your posture, mobility, strength, etc., educating you about managing your symptoms. Your program will likely include manual therapy (i.e., soft tissue work and/or joint mobilizations), targeted stretches, exercises, activity modification, or posture recommendations. We'll listen to your unique situation and specific issues and then work to help you find relief and get back to your normal routine.

Book Your Appointment Today!

If you're dealing with neck pain or looking for someone to help you figure out what is causing your issues, call us today and set up a consultation!



Sources: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S183695520301417?via%3Dihub> - <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36180150/> - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2270371/> - <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/2897299/>

Yummy Recipe: Sesame Garlic Ramen Noodles



Ingredients:

- 2-3 oz packages instant ramen noodles, seasoning packet discarded
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- 3½ tbsps garlic, minced
- 3½ tbsps soy sauce
- 3 tbsps brown sugar
- 3 tps shallot ginger chili oil, see notes for recipe
- 3 tbsps green onion, chopped
- 1 tsp roasted sesame seeds
- 2 tbsps ramen water, reserved

Here's how to make it:

Cook ramen in boiling water according to package instructions. 1 minute before ramen is al dente, reserve 2 tablespoons ramen water. Drain and set ramen aside. In a skillet over medium-high heat, add butter and sesame oil. Once butter melts, add minced garlic. Be sure not to allow garlic to brown and adjust heat, if needed. Cook for two minutes. Remove skillet from heat and add reserved ramen water, soy sauce and brown sugar. Stir until sugar dissolves. Place skillet back on burner and add ramen. Cook on medium heat for one minute and add shallot garlic chili oil. Stir in scallions and sesame seeds. Top with more scallions, sesame seeds if desired. Enjoy immediately.

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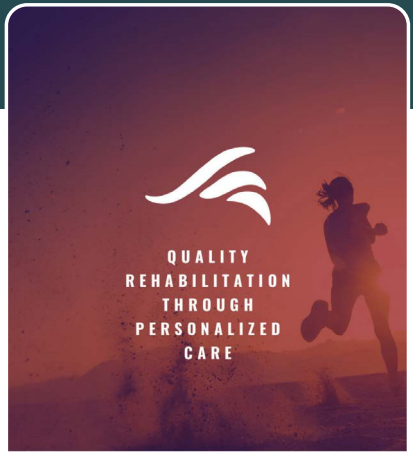


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