

# essential physio



MARCH 2019

## Four Surprising Causes Of Neck Pain

ESSENTIAL PHYSIOTHERAPY

If you are experiencing regular neck pain that just won't go away, it's possible that parts of your daily routine are contributing without you realising. Here are a few common everyday activities that might be making your neck pain worse.

### 1. Your sleeping position

It's easy to underestimate the impact your sleeping position has however, spending hours in one position will undoubtedly have an effect on your body. Pillows that are too high or too flat can mean your cervical joints are sitting at the end of their range in too much flexion or extension. Similarly, sleeping on your stomach often means your thoracic spine is locked into extension and your neck is fully rotated. In simpler terms, this means your joints are under more stress than necessary. Ideal sleeping posture allows your spine to maintain its natural curves.

### 2. Your daily commute

Many of us make sure our work stations are ergonomically set up to reduce stress and strain throughout the day. Few of us take the same consideration when it comes to driving. In fact, the set up of your car can be just as important as your work-desk, particularly if you are driving more than 30 minutes everyday. The correct setup in your car can mean you use less effort to drive and turn your head less often to check traffic.

Ensuring that your steering wheel, seat and mirrors are set up correctly could make a difference to your posture and even perhaps reduce neck pain and headaches. If you find that driving is still affecting your pain after making these changes, try catching public transport or riding a bike on alternative days.

### 3. Your downtime

Many of us unwind by watching TV or our laptops at the end of the day. Your position during this time can be something you give little thought to however, looking up to view a screen mounted on a wall or looking down at a small screen or laptop can put pressure on the upper structures of the neck. Take a few minutes to consider what posture you're sitting in before settling down to binge watch a series and see if you can either lower the height of your screen or raise it slightly so your neck can be in a more neutral position.

### 4. Your exercise routine

Any activity that requires sustained positions or repetitive neck movements can contribute to neck pain. Cyclists can be stuck in neck extension while looking ahead and breast stroke swimmers can also have excess neck extension. Freestyle swimmers with reduced thoracic or neck rotation can have difficulty achieving rotation when breathing which can cause pain and discomfort over time.

**Your physiotherapist is able to identify any daily habits or activities that might be contributing to your neck pain. Come and see us for an appointment to see how we can help.**



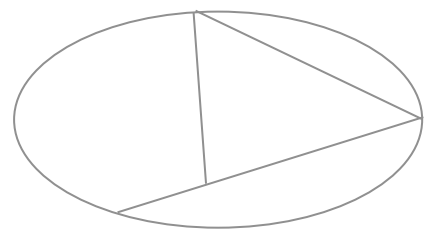
## Brain Teasers

1. What goes up and down but never moves?
2. How many likes did Cherie's photo get if only one of these statements is true?
  - a. Cherie's photo got at least 10 likes.
  - b. Cherie's photo got a less than 10 likes.
  - c. Cherie's photo got at least 1 like.

## Work It Out

Trace the pattern without taking your pencil off the paper. You must make one continuous line.

You are not allowed to cross the line, or go over any part of it twice.



## PhysioTip

Tight muscles are often weak muscles. Strengthening muscles can also improve flexibility

# Fibromyalgia

## What is it?

Fibromyalgia is a chronic condition characterised by widespread pain throughout the body along with fatigue, memory problems, sleep and mood disorders. Sufferers of fibromyalgia often spend years trying to find a diagnosis that fits their many symptoms and fluctuate between periods of having high energy and 'crashes' of fatigue and pain. In severe cases, fibromyalgia can cause significant lifestyle disruptions, including reduced activity, unemployment and depression.

The underlying mechanism that creates the symptoms of fibromyalgia has been shown to be increased pain amplification by the central nervous system and reduced activation of the sympathetic nervous system. Essentially this means that small pain signals in the body are processed as large pain signals by the central nervous system.

## What causes it?

Fibromyalgia is a complicated condition that is poorly understood. This can be very frustrating for sufferers, who often find themselves being shuffled between health practitioners looking for answers

and long term relief. While the pain generally feels muscular, usually little to no muscular damage or injury can be found on physical assessment. The symptoms can also mimic those of an infectious illness, or other chronic diseases. Often a diagnosis of fibromyalgia is reached after other diseases and causes have been ruled out.

The cause of fibromyalgia is as yet unknown, it was thought that the depression and reduced activity that are often associated with fibromyalgia could be causative, however it has been shown that these are symptoms of fibromyalgia rather than causes. Other significant signs of fibromyalgia are a lack of REM sleep in sufferers and a positive result of more than 11 out of 18 muscular trigger points.

## What is the treatment?

Following a diagnosis of fibromyalgia, patients primary strategy is to understand and manage their symptoms. This can involve pacing activities and balancing exercise so as to reduce 'crashes' and unhelpful pain cycles that lead to frustration. Identifying activities, employment and a routine that don't exacerbate symptoms can have a significant impact on quality of life for someone with fibromyalgia.

Having psychological support can also be very important to help patients deal with the emotional distress of a complex chronic condition that has no outward physical signs.

Treatments that have been shown to help reduce symptoms are TENS (electrical stimulation) which produces an endorphin response and can reduce pain. Certain medications may be helpful when prescribed by a doctor. Education and understanding of this condition can have the largest impact for sufferers, helping them to manage and maintain some control over their symptoms. Physiotherapists can have a large role in education and helping patients find a routine and activity level that helps them manage their condition as best as possible.

**None of the information in this newsletter is a replacement for proper medical advice. Always see a medical professional for advice on your individual injury.**



Answers: 1. Stairs. 2. Cherie's photo received no likes

## Broccolini, Blueberry and Parmesan Salad

1 Bunch of Fresh Broccolini  
100gm Whole Almonds  
1 Tbsp. Plain Hummus  
100gms Fresh Blueberries  
50gms Parmesan Shaved  
1 Clove of Garlic  
2 Tbsp. Olive Oil  
1 Tbsp. White Balsamic Vinegar  
1 Tbsp. Lemon Juice  
Salt and Pepper



1. Place a frying pan on medium heat and add 1 Tbsp. of olive oil and one clove of crushed garlic. Add almonds, either whole or sliced and cook for 1-2 minutes. Add broccolini and cook for 2-3 minutes, turning regularly. Finally add blueberries and cover pan, cook for a further 2 minutes then remove from heat.
2. Whisk together remaining olive oil, lemon juice, white balsamic vinegar and salt and pepper to create a dressing. Cover broccolini with dressing and move to a serving plate, add parmesan flakes.

**Garnish with hummus and serve as a healthy side dish.**

## Did You Know?

Right-handed people also mainly chew food on their right side.



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