

## **Cervical collars are for severe conditions**

**Question:** I recently was in the Emergency Room at the hospital where I was treated for a whiplash injury from an auto accident. I was given a cervical collar to wear but it made me feel worse. Why would this happen?

**Answer:** The function of a cervical collar is to minimize range-of-motion in the cervical spine. The brainstem extends from the skull at the foramen magnum (opening from skull to cervical spine) and is less protected at the first two cervical vertebrae. This means your brain tissue can get irritated or torn in a severe trauma to your neck or skull. Whenever an X-ray, magnetic-resonance imaging (MRI), or computerized-tomography imaging (CAT) scan indicates a potential fracture or torn tissue to your cervical spine it may be necessary to secure this instability to the neck with a cervical collar. The rule of thumb for cervical collar usage is to get one on as soon as possible in a severe injury, but also get it off as soon as possible. The neck has a very important job of holding an eight to 10 pound head up. Taking away the burden of weight bearing from the cervical muscles by using a cervical collar will encourage the muscles to become weak quickly.

This is why a cervical collar should only be used if absolutely necessary. Returning motion back to the cervical spine is essential for rehabilitation and healing. Early motion stimulates blood circulation through the damaged tissue. This distributes minerals and vitamins to help heal and nurture, as well as, flush dead tissue. Lack of motion encourages scar tissue to develop and lead to arthritis and permanent damage.

Chiropractic is an excellent solution to assisting in healing from whiplash injuries. Gentle chiropractic adjustments increase motion in cervical vertebrae, promoting healing.

**Quote of the week:** *“To succeed do the best you can, where you are, with what you have.”* – Unknown