



## Whiplash Disorder (WAD)

Whiplash is defined as an acceleration-deceleration injury of the neck resulting in a sprain-strain of the cervical spine.

If the WAD is due to a motor vehicle collision (MVC) it is important to seek a professional assessment within 10 days of the collision in order for the proper diagnosis to be made and for the treatment plan to be developed. Car Insurance companies may be responsible for covering treatment costs, but they do have timelines that must be followed in order to access funding for treatments. Patients and therapists must complete and submit forms to insurance companies within 10 days of the collision.

## TREATMENT:

The advice for this condition is to stay active and follow a program of exercise. Activity and exercise have been proven to be more effective than wearing a collar. During the initial phase of recovery the focus is on reducing inflammation and restoring range of motion and mobility. Strengthening should begin once mobility has been restored and focus on strengthening the deep muscles of the neck which provide stability (like core muscles for the low back). It has been suggested that a multi-disciplinary approach consisting of physical therapy, massage, acupuncture and intramuscular stimulation may be the best for treatment of WAD's.

Classification of WAD is as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
Muscle strain	Muscle strain/ ligament sprain	Possible disc protrusion	Cervical fracture/ dislocation
Neck stiffness	Neck and/or back stiffness	Nerve root signs	Nerve root signs
Neck pain and tenderness	Neck and/or back pain	Neck or back pain	Neck pain
No physical signs	Paraspinal tenderness	Restricted ROM	Restricted ROM
Normal reflexes and neurological tests	Restricted ROM	Abnormal reflexes and +ive neurological tests	Abnormal reflexes and +ive neurological tests
No need for Xray	Normal reflexes and neurological tests	Possible upper motor neuron signs	Possible upper motor neuron signs
	X-ray film: no fracture or dislocation	X-ray film: no fracture or dislocation	X-ray film: fracture or dislocation
		CT/MRI may show area of nerve involvement	CT/MRI may show area of nerve/fracture/ dislocation/ spinal cord involvement

Ice is most effective within the first 48-72 hours of a whiplash associated disorder. Range of motion exercises should begin as soon as possible and patients should seek a physical therapy assessment within 10 days of the accident to ensure a smooth recovery.