

Cervical Radiculopathy: A Common Cause of Neck Pain

What's the problem?

Cervical radiculopathy is caused by a pinched nerve in your neck. It can cause symptoms in your shoulder, arm, or hand. Sometimes the symptoms happen in both arms.

What causes it?

The most common cause is wear and tear to the bones of your neck. This happens over many years, and it is more common in older persons. It can also be caused by a sudden movement or injury.

What are the symptoms?

- Pain
- Numbness
- Weakness
- “Pins and needles” feeling

How long does it usually last?

Most people with this problem will get back to normal in four to six weeks. Your doctor may want you to rest, take medicine, do exercises at home, or get physical therapy or a massage during this time.

Do I need to be tested?

Most people do not need tests for this problem. But if you don't get better within four to six weeks, your doctor might want you to get an x-ray, MRI, or nerve test.

What else do I need to know?

It is important to tell your doctor if you start to lose weight, get a fever, or notice problems with strength or feelings in other parts of your body. Also, tell your doctor if the pain or weakness in your neck and arms gets worse.

Where else can I get more information?

Your doctor

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
<http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=a00332>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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