

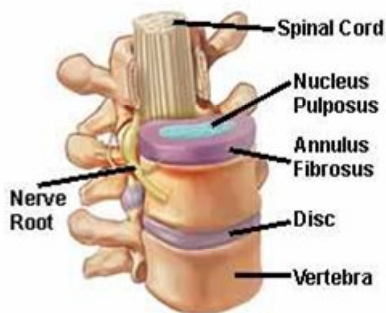
# Zone 1

## Central neck pain



This pain usually comes from damage to a disc in the neck – the cushion between the bones (vertebrae). A disc is a ring of strong fibrous tissue, similar to a ligament, which contains a softer centre. This is all firmly stuck to the bones above and below, allowing them to move slightly, relative to each other. A tear in the ring of the disc is quite common, often caused by an injury years before (even in childhood). It is only

when this becomes inflamed, due to bad posture, heavy lifting, awkward work positions or another injury, that it starts to hurt. The damage can be seen on an MRI scan, not on an x-ray.



With this problem, the neck becomes straight and the muscles become very tight and stiff, often called “spasm”. This can also cause headache, as these same muscles attach to the bottom of the skull.

Treatment is to take the pressure off the muscles and to suppress the inflammation. A COLLAR will help – do not wear it continuously, but only when you are up and about. A TENS machine may help. Anti-inflammatory medication can help, either as a gel, using an APPLICATOR to massage the muscles whilst it is being applied, or as tablets, such as NUROFEN (always read the label in the package).

Gentle exercises from an osteopath or physiotherapist and massage can help. They should be “isometric”, meaning strengthening without movement. Holding a cushion against a wall, with the forehead, or back of the head, pressing in and holding for ten seconds and then releasing – relax – repeat several times as tolerated. Mobilising the joints, a technique performed by these therapists will allow the spine to curve again, as it should, which also takes pressure off the damaged area.

In the car, tilt your rear view mirror, so that you have to “sit tall” to see in it. This should ensure you do not start to slump, leading to the head moving forwards and straining the neck. In the office, make sure your chair, desk and computer are appropriately positioned. Your screen should be elevated, so that you are not looking down.

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