

community connection

Physical Therapy for Successful Management of Neck and Shoulder Pain

By Carla Kazimir PT

We often see patients with both neck and shoulder pain. Patients are not always certain how their pain started and they don't know if it is primarily neck or shoulder. They only feel the raw ache and burning pain that may radiate down to the finger tips.

How do we discern whether a problem is stemming from the neck or the shoulder? When a client comes in for an evaluation we discuss what is happening in their lives. We discuss their occupation, their activities of daily living. We find out the type and quality of the pain. We discuss the intensity and duration of the pain. We measure the mobility and the strength of both the neck and the shoulder. Based on objective findings we proceed with a treatment plan.

If we key into the specific deficits, often times both the neck AND the shoulder gets better. It is common for neck pain to have a shoulder component. Sometimes the weight of

the upper body musculature pulls down on the cervical vertebrae causing added stress and subsequent pain.

Sometimes just counseling a patient to prop their arms up on pillows when they read at night takes a load off the neck and prevents pain.

A combination of manual therapy and gentle flexibility exercises for both the neck and shoulders will help a great deal. Strengthening the surrounding muscles of the scapula and the upper back will improve posture and usually reduce the pain significantly.

We use Graston instrument assisted soft tissue mobilization to break away scar tissue and free up soft tissue. This technique is pain free and non-invasive. The results are immediate and lasting. We utilize the Graston technique every day in the clinic and our patients are often shocked that it makes such a huge difference so quickly.

We use Kinesio taping to help support the neck and

the shoulder during treatment. Patients can go home after being taped and feel the continued support for up to 5 days after therapy. Kinesio tape is not just for elite athletes. Most patients benefit from Kinesio taping.

Other modalities include electrical stimulation can be used to reduce tenderness and swelling and it can also re-educate the muscles. If a patient has a pinched nerve Cervical (neck) traction can be of huge benefit.

We have so many tools at our disposal to help people get out of their pain quickly. Then they follow up with a home exercise program so that the posture improves, the neck and shoulders are better supported and the pain does not return.

If you are suffering from acute or chronic neck and shoulder pain it should be evaluated. You do not want abnormal irritation and pressure to be exerted on your spine and shoulders for a prolonged period of time as this can make the



pathology worse. An evaluation will provide a wealth of information and healing can begin.

North Valley Physical Therapy is located in the Knollwood Shopping Center at 11858 1/2 Balboa Bl in Granada Hills. Please call to schedule an appointment 818-217-4868. We are Medicare and Blue Shield Providers. We bill all private insurances. www.NorthValleyPT.com.

Carla Kazimir PT has been practicing in the San Fernando Valley since 1985. Carla is a member of the Senior Service Business Council and on the Board of Directors of the North Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce.

