Neck pain is a common complaint. Neck muscles can be strained from poor posture — whether it's leaning over your computer or hunching over your workbench. Osteoarthritis also is a common cause of neck pain.

Rarely, neck pain can be a symptom of a more serious problem. Seek medical care if your neck pain is accompanied by numbness or loss of strength in your arms or hands or if you have shooting pain into your shoulder or down your arm.

Symptoms

Signs and symptoms include:

* Pain that's often worsened by holding your head in one place for long periods, such as when driving or working at a computer
* Muscle tightness and spasms
* Decreased ability to move your head
* Headache

**When to see a doctor**

Most neck pain improves gradually with home treatment. If not, see your doctor.

Seek immediate care if severe neck pain results from an injury, such as a motor vehicle accident, diving accident or fall.

Contact a doctor if your neck pain:

* Is severe
* Persists for several days without relief
* Spreads down arms or legs
* Is accompanied by headache, numbness, weakness or tingling