

Cervical Spondylosis (Neck Wear and Tear) & Neck Pain

Understanding your neck pain—and knowing when to get it checked

What is Cervical Spondylosis?

Cervical spondylosis is a term used to describe **age-related wear and tear in the neck**. It affects the cervical spine—the part of your spine in your neck.

In simple terms:

👉 **It means the structures in your neck (discs, joints, and bones) are gradually wearing down over time.**

Your neck is made up of:

- Bones (vertebrae)
- Discs (soft cushions between the bones)
- Joints that allow movement
- Nerves that travel from the spinal cord to your arms

Over time, these structures can change:

- Discs may dry out and lose height
- Bones may develop small growths (bone spurs)
- Ligaments may thicken
- Joints may become stiff

These changes can sometimes **narrow the space for nerves**, leading to pain or nerve-related symptoms.

Why Does It Happen?

Cervical spondylosis is very common and often part of natural aging. However, certain factors can make it more noticeable or symptomatic:

- Prolonged sitting (especially desk work)
- Poor posture (looking down at phones or laptops)
- Repetitive neck strain
- Previous neck injuries
- Lack of neck muscle strength

👉 Many people have these changes on scans—but not everyone has symptoms.

Symptoms to Watch For

Symptoms can vary from mild discomfort to more significant nerve-related problems.

1. Common Neck Pain Symptoms

- Dull or aching pain in the neck
- Stiffness, especially in the morning
- Difficulty turning the head
- Pain that worsens after long periods of sitting
- Muscle tightness around the shoulders

👉 Many patients describe:

“My neck feels tight and sore after working or using my phone.”

2. Pain Spreading to the Shoulder or Arm

When nerves are irritated, pain may travel beyond the neck:

- Pain going into the shoulder
- Pain radiating down the arm
- Burning or sharp pain

This is often referred to as **nerve pain**.

3. Numbness or Tingling

- “Pins and needles” in the arm or hand
- Reduced sensation in fingers
- A feeling of heaviness in the arm

4. Weakness

- Difficulty gripping objects
- Dropping things
- Reduced strength in the arm or hand

👉 This is more important than pain and should not be ignored.

5. Balance or Coordination Problems (More Serious)

In some cases, the spinal cord itself may be affected.

- Unsteady walking
- Poor balance
- Difficulty with fine hand movements
- Feeling clumsy

Warning Signs 🚨

Seek medical attention urgently if you notice:

- Increasing weakness in arms or hands
- Difficulty walking or maintaining balance
- Loss of coordination
- Numbness affecting multiple areas
- Problems with bladder or bowel control

👉 These may indicate **significant pressure on the spinal cord**, which requires prompt evaluation.

When Should You See a Neurosurgeon?

Not all neck pain needs specialist care. Many cases improve with simple measures.

However, you should consider seeing a neurosurgeon if:

- Pain persists beyond a few weeks
- Pain is severe or worsening
- Pain spreads to the arm
- There is numbness or tingling
- You notice weakness
- Daily activities are affected
- Symptoms do not improve with basic treatment

👉 A key message:

Pain is common—but nerve symptoms need attention.

Early assessment helps prevent progression and gives you more treatment options.

How is Cervical Spondylosis Treated?

The reassuring news is:

👉 **Most patients do not need surgery.**

Treatment depends on your symptoms and how much they affect your life.

1. Non-Surgical Treatment (First Step)

For most patients, conservative treatment works well.

Physiotherapy

- Strengthening neck muscles
- Improving posture
- Gentle stretching exercises

Medications

- Pain relief
- Anti-inflammatory medications
- Nerve pain medication (if needed)

Lifestyle changes

- Adjusting workstation setup
- Avoiding prolonged phone use (“text neck”)
- Improving posture

Heat therapy

- Helps relax tight muscles

2. Injections

If pain persists, targeted injections may be recommended:

- Reduce inflammation around nerves
- Provide pain relief
- Allow better participation in physiotherapy

3. When is Surgery Needed?

Surgery is considered when:

- There is significant nerve compression
- Weakness is present or worsening
- Spinal cord is affected
- Pain is severe and persistent
- Non-surgical treatments have failed

👉 The goal is:

To relieve pressure on nerves or the spinal cord

4. Types of Surgery

Modern spine surgery is safer and more refined than many people expect.

Depending on the condition, options may include:

Anterior Cervical Discectomy (ACDF)

- Removing the damaged disc
- Relieving pressure on nerves
- Stabilising the spine

Disc replacement

- Preserves movement in selected patients

Posterior decompression

- Creating more space for the spinal cord

What Patients Often Worry About

“Is surgery the only option?”

No. Most patients improve without surgery.

“Is neck surgery dangerous?”

All surgery carries risk, but modern techniques make it safer and more precise.

“Will I recover?”

Many patients experience significant improvement, especially when treated early.

Why Choose a Specialist?

Cervical spondylosis is not just “neck pain”—it can involve **important nerves and the spinal cord**.

Choosing the right specialist matters because:

- Proper diagnosis avoids unnecessary treatment
- Early detection prevents long-term damage
- Not all patients need surgery
- If surgery is required, precision is critical

As a **Consultant Neurosurgeon**, I specialise in treating spine conditions, including nerve and spinal cord compression.

My approach is always:

- ✓ Clear and simple explanations
- ✓ Careful assessment of your symptoms
- ✓ Prioritising non-surgical care when possible
- ✓ Using advanced surgical techniques when needed
- ✓ Supporting you throughout your recovery

👉 Most importantly:

Your treatment is tailored to your condition—not a one-size-fits-all approach.

A Reassuring Thought

Hearing terms like “degeneration” or “spondylosis” can sound worrying.

But here is what you should know:

- 👉 It is a **very common condition**
- 👉 Many people live well with it
- 👉 Most cases can be managed without surgery
- 👉 Early care can prevent worsening symptoms

You do not have to accept neck pain as part of daily life.

Take the First Step Toward Relief

If you are experiencing:

- Persistent neck pain
- Pain going into your arm
- Numbness or weakness

It is worth getting a proper evaluation.

A consultation can help you understand:

- What is causing your symptoms
- Whether it is serious
- What your treatment options are

Book Your Consultation

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- 👉 Don't wait until symptoms worsen
- 👉 Early treatment can prevent long-term problems
- 👉 The right guidance can help you return to a comfortable, active life

Take the first step today—your neck health matters.