The neck (cervical spine) is composed of vertebrae that begin in the upper torso and end at the base of the skull. The neck has a significant amount of motion and supports the weight of the head. However, because it is less protected than the rest of the spine, the neck can be vulnerable to injury and disorders that produce pain and restrict motion.

Neck pain may result from abnormalities in the soft tissues—the muscles, ligaments, and nerves—as well as in bones and disks of the spine. The most common causes of neck pain are soft-tissue abnormalities due to injury (a sprain) or prolonged wear and tear. In some people, neck problems may be the source of pain in the upper back, shoulders, or arms.

The disk acts as a shock absorber between the bones in the neck. In cervical disk degeneration (which typically occurs in people age 40 years and older), the normal gelatin-like center of the disk degenerates and the space between the vertebrae narrows. As the disk space narrows, added stress is applied to the joints of the spine causing further wear and degenerative disease. The cervical disk may also protrude and put pressure on the spinal cord or nerve roots when the rim of the disk weakens. This is known as a herniated cervical disk.

Because the neck is so flexible and because it supports the head, it is extremely vulnerable to injury. Motor vehicle or diving accidents, contact sports, and falls may result in neck injury. The regular use of safety belts in motor vehicles can help to prevent or minimize neck injury. A “rear end” automobile collision may result in hyperextension, a backward motion of the neck beyond normal limits, or hyperflexion, a forward motion of the neck beyond normal limits. The most common neck injuries involve the soft tissues: the muscles and ligaments. Severe neck injuries with a fracture or dislocation of the neck may damage the spinal cord and cause paralysis.

Intermittent neck pain is common and is experienced by almost everyone at some point in their life. Most neck pain from a strain or mild wear and tear will get better in time.

You should seek medical care when neck pain is:

- Continuous and lasts longer than 2-3 weeks
- Severe
- Accompanied by pain that radiates down the arms or legs
- Accompanied by headaches, numbness, tingling, or weakness

Many patients seek orthopaedic care for neck pain because orthopaedists are specifically trained to diagnose, treat, and help prevent problems involving the muscles, bones, joints, ligaments, and tendons. The Orthopaedic Clinic has a comprehensive team of spine specialists including surgeons, therapists and physician’s assistants designated to evaluate, diagnose and treat neck disorders.

Let our experts evaluate you and help get you back to a life without neck pain!

Call today to schedule an appointment. (334) 749-8303

The Orthopaedic Clinic has got you covered. Our doctors have specialized fellowship training in all of the major areas of orthopedic surgery; hand and wrist, foot and ankle, sports medicine, back and neck and joint replacement. They bring their skill, expertise and experience from some of the most prestigious institutions across the country to East Alabama to provide excellent orthopedic care to our region.

Let our experts evaluate you and help get you back to a life without neck pain!

Call today to schedule an appointment. (334) 749-8303

When it comes to bone and joint problems, The Orthopaedic Clinic has got you covered. Our doctors have specialized fellowship training in all of the major areas of orthopedic surgery; hand and wrist, foot and ankle, sports medicine, back and neck and joint replacement. They bring their skill, expertise and experience from some of the most prestigious institutions across the country to East Alabama to provide excellent orthopedic care to our region.