

# HEALTH REPORT

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## COMPREHENSIVE NECK PAIN STUDY FINDS ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS WORK BEST

A recently concluded 7-year study points persons who suffer from the discomforts of neck pain toward alternative therapies and away from medical intervention when seeking help. Researchers named Acupuncture, neck manipulation and massage as the preferred treatments. Improvements through exercise, neck mobilization and continued education were also among recommended interventions.

This long-term study was undertaken by The Bone and Joint Decade 2000-2010 Task Force on Neck Pain and Its Associated Disorders. The organization produced a 236-page review of the current research on neck pain and published its results in the journal *Spine*. A multi-national and inter-disciplinary study team included Canadian, American, South American, Australasian and European researchers.

“Neck pain is not a trivial condition for many people,” says Task Force president Dr. Scott Haldeman, clinical professor, Department of Neurology at the University of California, Irvine, and adjunct professor, Department of Epidemiology University of California Los Angeles. “It can be associated with headaches, arm and upper back pain and depression. Whether it arises from sports injuries, car collisions, workplace issues or stress, it can be incapacitating. Understanding the best way to diagnose and manage this problem is of high importance for those who are suffering and for those who manage and pay for its care.”

Researchers suggested that people suffering from neck pain should avoid using neck brace devices in an attempt to handle the condition. Also, they failed to find favor with corticosteroid injections and surgery. Treatments with corticosteroid injections and surgery for neck pain relief should only be considered when there is associated extreme pain in the arm or in the case of a fracture or a serious disease. Surgery should be seen only as a last resort for severe and persistent pain.

Which alternative therapy a neck pain sufferer should embark upon was not designated by researchers. They did advise that alternative treatments to manipulate the neck should be considered. Often, relief can be provided through Chiropractic adjustments as well as the intervention offered through Acupuncture and massage.

Researchers cautioned consumer awareness toward anyone that makes a “big claim” to solve neck pain. They also suggested that some relief should be noticed within 2-4 weeks of beginning treatment. If there is little or no relief after this amount of time, another form of alternative therapy should be considered.