Cervical Acceleration Injury

_Cervical Acceleration/Deceleration Injury: “WHIPLASH”_

**Situation:** Cervical acceleration/deceleration injury—commonly referred to as _whiplash_—occurs when traumatic forces are applied to the neck. Shearing forces such as a sudden car impact, or a slip and fall, or a sports injury can all result in damage and inflammation of the spine.

**Causes:** When shearing forces are applied to the spine—such as in a rear end or other car collision—the violence of the impact causes destructive damage to the muscles, joints and ligaments of the spine. The ligaments are the spine’s support system and once disrupted or damaged, they do not grow back like other tissues. This leaves the joints of the spine misaligned with less stability and excess joint movement which causes further damage and hastens the degenerative processes.

**Symptoms:** Damage from whiplash can occur immediately, but sometimes the symptoms are not realized for days, weeks or months. Symptoms can be as simple as neck stiffness to much more complex neurologic symptoms that include headaches, memory loss, insomnia, and dizziness. Decrease in motion of the neck with muscular pain is common. Pain can be sharp—shooting to a stiff ache at times. Radiating pain can occur to the head, jaw, upper back, arm, forearm and hands.

**Treatment:** A doctor of chiropractic is your health care provider who is specifically trained to evaluate your whiplash injury and treat its symptoms. A chiropractor can immediately take X-rays and determine the extent of the damage to the spine. Massage therapy, acupuncture, and physical therapy, as well as other treatment modalities such as ultrasound, cold laser, and ice/heat, may be triaged with your chiropractic care.