Whiplash

SYMPTOMS: Injuries to the neck following a car accident are referred to as "whiplash." Symptoms may not fully appear for several weeks after a car accident. Symptoms suggestive of whiplash may include some or all of the following: headaches, double vision or blurred vision, vomiting, dizziness, jaw pain or clicking, ear pain, stiffness in the neck, difficulty turning the head, pins and needles, numbness or tingling into one or both arms, weakness in the hands. Symptoms may not fully appear until several weeks after the accident.

CAUSES: Injuries to the neck caused by the sudden movement of the head, backward, forward, or sideways, are referred to as "whiplash." These injuries often result after a traumatic car accident most commonly involving a rear-end collision. Oftentimes, even in collisions as low as five miles per hour, there may be very little damage to the car; however, the individual in the car can still sustain neck injury. When the head is suddenly thrown in any direction beyond its normal limits, the muscles and ligaments supporting the spine and head can be overstretched, twisted and torn. The soft, jelly-like discs that act as shock absorbers between the spinal vertebrae can also be damaged. Doctors classify injuries to the disc as bulges, herniations or ruptures depending on the severity. The adjacent vertebrae can be displaced out of alignment resulting in increased stress to the discs.

TREATMENT: Despite the increased safety precautions of seat belts and air bags, whiplash injuries continue to result in significant lost work time and disability. Early treatment is most important in order for proper healing to occur in the delicate structures of the neck. The longer treatment is delayed, the higher the probability for adhesions (similar to grizzle on a steak) and bony arthritis (spinal decay) to develop. Spinal adjustments on a regular basis allow the soft tissue structures, such as discs, ligaments and muscles to heal up in their proper position. The concept is similar to balancing the tires on your car. For example, if a tire goes bald, think what would happen it you put a new tire on without getting the new wheel aligned? Subsequently, the new tire would again wear down the rubber treads faster than the remaining tires similar to the discs and ligaments in your spine. Proper alignment ensures that the spine and supporting structures maintain proper structure and function allowing for maximum function and longevity.