

# Physical Fitness is Key to Recovery

The best therapeutic measures cannot prevent some individuals from developing chronic pain after a cervical spine whiplash injury. Various research studies have listed as high as 62% of individuals as still recovering from neck pain 6 months after their initial whiplash. Individuals who receive therapy have a better chance at success, but the percentages are still high. The results are even worse for victims of multiple automobile accidents. These startling statistics, and the healthcare costs associated with these statistics, has led many researchers to probe into why some individuals recover quickly while others do not. One of the keys is physical fitness.

Physical exercise both prior to and after a soft tissue injury, such as a whiplash, is predictive of a quick recovery and a good outcome. Re-examining the 6 month recovery rates mentioned in the prior paragraph demonstrates that 80% of individuals with a high fitness level recovered, while only 35% of low fitness level individuals had done so.

After an injury, individuals who were able to maintain moderate levels of activity were able to recover more quickly and to return to their daily activities with less difficulty. Those with sedentary lifestyles or those with discontinued exercise were less likely to recover. Interestingly, those individuals with very high fitness levels who attempted to quickly return to high level fitness activities did poorly. This was attributed to inadequate recovery.

A number of conclusions can be made from the research regarding fitness and whiplash recovery. If you have an injury and have a lower level of fitness, expect that your recovery will likely take longer. Be prepared for more physical therapy and perhaps a longer period of time before you can return to your regular activities. When choosing what type of therapy you may receive, look for practitioners that encourage exercise in addition to other proven types of therapies, such as massage, ultrasound and spinal manipulation. Those individuals who spend extended periods of time driving should be more diligent of their fitness levels due to their increased risk of motor vehicle injuries. Lastly, be patient with the healing process. Even with the best treatment and fitness, some soft tissue injuries will not recover quickly

Don't assume that your injuries will go away with time. Improve your chances by finding a fitness minded doctor or therapist to guide you through the process of recovery.