



Connecticut Wing Safety Alert!

24 March 2003

Recently we have seen a wide variety of challenges in regards to our local weather. We live in a very diverse area and lately we have seen drastic changes in our environment. With that in mind here is something for all to think about when we are traveling along our roads and highways. I would like all of you to think about what happens to your body when you encounter an abrupt stop whether on the ground or in the air. Serious injuries can result from a so called minor sudden stop. I am talking about Whiplash. It is something we don't think about very often.

Whiplash results from sudden extension and flexion of the neck, some force snaps the head snaps forward and backward resulting in injury. It can injure intervertebral joints, discs, and ligaments, cervical muscles, or even nerve roots. Whiplash can be accompanied by concussions or TMJ which is Temporomandibular joint disease - a painful condition affecting the area where the lower jaw connects to the sides of the skull which impairs function and sensation in the face and jaw, which may spread to the ears, neck, and shoulders.

The effects of Whiplash can be short term or life long, and can leave the neck forever vulnerable to injury. The shoulders and arms often are also affected by whiplash, even to the extent of paralysis.

Whiplash -- the most common injury resulting from motor vehicle accidents -- accounts for 10% of all long-term disability conditions from motor vehicle accidents. While auto accidents are most often the cause, it can also be a result of violence -- especially domestic violence -- trauma at work, amusement park rides and even air travel.

The pain from whiplash --as with sprains, strains, and contusions--may be felt immediately or not until several days after the incident. Whiplash can be deadly. If it is severe enough, it can damage the brain stem and cause death.

When you feel the slightest pain -- whether at the accident scene, or hours or days later -- go to the doctor or hospital immediately. There are several methods to determine whiplash. Sometimes a simple physical examination is all that is needed while other physicians will take x-rays to determine there are no fractures of the vertebrae or to see how the alignment of the neck has been altered. If you're taken to the hospital from an accident, you will be put in a hard neck brace and on a back board. When released from the hospital you may be sent home with a foam-rubber neck brace. You may feel awkward wearing this brace but it will ease the stress on your neck, which is very important to healing.

The courses of treatment will vary depending on the extent of your injury and if you have injury to intervertebral joints, discs, and ligaments, cervical muscles, or nerve roots:

Physical therapy consisting of heat, cold, ultrasound, massage, and gradually increasing exercises. Chiropractic treatment of whiplash realigns the neck, heals the muscles and helps regain flexibility. Neurological evaluation and even neurosurgery.

The bottom line here is don't take chances with your physical health. When in any type of accident if you feel unusual pains, do not hesitate to get checked out. It is far better to be overly cautious then to experience an injury which could last a life time.

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