



## DOES STRESS CAUSE NECK PAIN?

Does stress cause neck pain? The short answer is no! At Atlanta Human Performance Center, we like to say “contributes to” instead of “cause.” The casual way healthcare professionals throw around terms can lead to confusion and, worse still, ineffective treatment. Fortunately, our highly skilled Doctors of Physical Therapy know how to dig deep and find the root cause of your neck pain, and this information helps you find relief!

Let's discuss Nicole, a 40-something-year-old working mother of three. Nicole was used to being very active, balancing her work schedule with getting her kids to all the various activities and school functions that come with being a mom nowadays.

Her neck pain first started as a crick in the neck when she woke up one morning. As the day progressed from driving her kids around to sitting at her desk, she noticed turning her head became more difficult and painful, making focusing on work nearly impossible.

Nicole struggled to figure out why her neck started hurting and came to the conclusion that stress “must be” the culprit. The more pain and difficulty moving she had, the more convinced she was that stress was to blame.

### UNDERSTANDING NICOLE'S NECK PAIN

One of the most common things we hear from our patients is that their pain started for “no apparent reason.” Like Nicole, people will wake up with a crick in their neck or notice a stiffness turning when driving in the car. It is also common for people to notice tightness in their upper back and neck after a long day.

So, what is actually the source of the pain? In most cases, there is an issue with the neck joints or the neck muscles due to prolonged positions. Our neck joints don't like remaining in any position for extended periods. In Nicole's case, she first noticed her pain in the morning, which may have been related to her neck position while sleeping. It is also important to note that in Nicole's case, the first sign of any issue was in the morning when she woke up, unrelated to stress.

As Nicole's day progressed, her pain got worse. But this also was more likely related to how she held her neck while driving or sitting at her computer. In both cases, her posture, specifically how she held her neck, seems to have contributed to her pain. Prolonged sitting can lead to a forward head position, resulting in tension to soft tissue (i.e., muscles, tendons, and ligaments) or negative changes to our blood flow.

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Call Today At Our East Point Location **404.446.1224** Or Atlanta location **404.346.1526**



# Separating Muscle and Joint Pain: The Key to Lasting Results

Do you notice tightness in your upper back and neck? Is it more tight on one side than that on the other? The location and characteristics of your neck pain are valuable clues for our skilled Doctors of Physical Therapy at Atlanta Human Performance Center to identify the likely culprit for your pain, which helps us guide you to lasting relief.

Ready to unlock the secret to lasting relief from neck and upper back pain? Don't ignore those subtle signs – reach out to our skilled Doctors of Physical Therapy today, and let us help you resolve your pain once and for all!

## Neck Pain – Muscle vs. Joint

It can be difficult for people to determine where their pain originates. One of the most common reasons people describe their pain is “no apparent reason.” It often seems to come out of the blue or while doing the same everyday things you usually do.

You can use these clues to point you in the right direction:

- **Pain on one side = joint pain.** Although this, and all other clues, is not 100% true, it is a good starting point. Muscle tension tends to be equally distributed, whereas joint pain is typically one-sided.
- **Difficulty or inability to turn = joint dysfunction.** Muscle tension tends to make movement uncomfortable or to feel tight on the opposite side of where you're turning towards (pain on the left when turning right). Joint dysfunction usually causes the inability to turn or the sensation of a blockage when turning to the same side as the pain (pain on the right when turning right).
- **Pain that travels = joint.** Muscles tend to feel tight and sore in the muscles themselves, compared to joint pain, which travels from the source of pain up into the head or down into the shoulder and arm.

These clues can help us determine what is causing your pain, but the best way to get lasting relief is to schedule an appointment with one of our Doctors of Physical Therapy!

The muscles of our neck function best when we move them. So, holding her head in one position likely led to irritation of the muscles and affected her ability to move her neck, which in turn caused stress.

Stress “contributes” to neck pain because, when we experience stress, our bodies naturally respond by tensing up as a protective measure. This tension can lead to discomfort, particularly in the neck and upper back region. Research studies have found that individuals with higher stress levels reported increased neck pain as compared to those with lower stress levels. This is why we say “contributes” to, but not the cause of, neck pain.

## HOW PHYSICAL THERAPY CAN HELP ALLEVIATE NECK PAIN

We will target the source of your pain by performing a thorough examination, starting with your medical history and details about how, when, and where your symptoms began. As we saw with Nicole, determining how, when, and why the pain started helps us eliminate possibilities and get to the actual root cause(s).

Our Doctors of Physical Therapy will also analyze your posture and movement to identify any limitations or restrictions contributing to your condition. We'll use this information to design a program that addresses your specific needs.

Our treatment plans focus on relieving your pain and improving your posture, mobility, strength, etc., and educating you about managing your symptoms. Your program will likely include manual therapy (i.e., soft tissue work and/or joint mobilizations), targeted stretches, exercises, activity modification, or posture recommendations.

We'll listen to your unique situation and specific issues and then work to help you find relief and get back to your normal routine.

## BOOK YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY!

If you're dealing with neck pain or looking for someone to help you figure out what is causing your issues, call us today and set up a consultation!



**CLICK HERE TO SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY!**



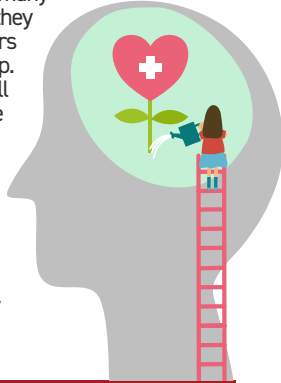


# HEALTH TIPS

With Dr. Keith E. Evans, MD, PT, DPT, DN CERT. CEO/Director of Atlanta Human Performance Center

## 5 ways to Invest in Your Health

- 1. Make sure to eat healthy.** Eating healthy doesn't mean you have to stay away from all sweets and salty snacks, it just means being smart about your food choices. Try swapping out your burger for lunch for a healthy meal of salmon and asparagus and buy less sugary snacks at the grocery store.
- 2. Exercise regularly.** We all have unique bodily compositions. You don't have to work out so hard that you pass out! Find a workout that raises your heart rate as much as feels comfortable for you. In this sense, exercise turns into medication.
- 3. Get to sleep at a decent hour.** Everywhere we look nowadays, there's a glow of blue light glaring back at us. Try to put your phone down and turn your television off in the evenings so your mind and body have a chance to slow down and get ready for sleep. Staying up until two in the morning is setting your body up for exhaustion. If you must have a light on at night, Harvard Health suggests "[using] dim red lights for night lights. Red light is less likely to shift circadian rhythm and suppress melatonin."
- 4. Have a primary care physician.** Shockingly enough, many people do not have primary care physicians! When they don't feel good, they turn to express medical centers (which can be quite pricey and time consuming) for help. Having a primary care doctor is a good way to keep all of your medical history in one place. You can also have a "go-to" office to call when you're in need of referrals for specialists.
- 5. Pay attention to your mental state of being.** Being healthy is about more than just your physical state. Your mental and emotional wellbeing are important as well. Investing in your health means investing in all aspects of your body, and if you're struggling with anxiety or depression, it could benefit you to see a counselor.



Call today at our new East Point location 404-446-1224 or Atlanta location 404-346-1526. Or visit [www.ahpcpt.com](http://www.ahpcpt.com).

## WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR SUCCESS STORY!

Click below to tell your PT story and leave a review. We look forward to hearing from you!



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## Who Do You Know That Needs Physical Therapy?

### Do You Have Friends Or Family That Cannot:

- ✓ Move without pain
- ✓ Sit for long periods
- ✓ Bend and move freely
- ✓ Walk for long distances
- ✓ Balance confidently & securely
- ✓ Live active and healthy

CALL (404) 346-1526 TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH OUR DOCTORS OF PHYSICAL THERAPY TODAY!

### PROTEIN PB & J SMOOTHIE BOWL

- 1/4 cup almond, oat or milk of your choice
- 2/3 cup frozen blueberries
- 2/3 cup sliced strawberries, frozen
- 1 scoop vanilla protein powder
- 1 tbsp peanut butter
- Optional toppings: 1 tablespoon melted peanut butter for drizzling, blueberries, chia seeds



Place your milk into the blender. Add frozen fruit, protein powder and 1 tablespoon peanut butter. Seal and blend until smooth. Pour out into a bowl. If using, melt the remaining peanut butter in the microwave 30 to 45 seconds and drizzle over the bowl. Add desired toppings. Eat right away with a spoon!

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\* PHYSICAL THERAPY HOURS ONLY. THIS LOCATION DOES NOT HAVE A FITNESS CENTER.  
MON. WED. & FRI. | 8AM-6PM • TUES. & THUR. | 9AM-4PM  
SAT & SUN. | BY APPOINTMENT ONLY