

# Neck Pain





The Department of Orthopaedics offers specialist medical and surgical treatments on musculoskeletal disorders, joint replacements, foot and ankle disorders, among other trauma injuries. Our consultants and surgeons work closely with sports medicine physicians, physiotherapists, podiatrists and other healthcare professionals to help patients return to their normal activities after surgery.

Most of us experience a neck pain at least once in our life time. Its intensity can range from mild to a severe pain that is disabling. The majority of neck pain will resolve by itself, but some cases progress to chronic neck pain when symptoms persist for more than three months.

## What is neck pain?

Neck pain can be described as an axial or radiating neck pain. Axial neck pain is pain that occurs around the spine and the muscles surrounding it. It may go down to the shoulder blades and is usually caused by a degeneration of the cervical spine.

Radiating pain is pain that radiates from the neck to the arm. The neck pain itself may be less intense than the radiating pain, which usually implies nerve root compression.

Associated symptoms include difficulty walking and performing hand coordination, bowel and bladder disturbances that may be caused by spinal cord compression.

In most cases, the exact cause of neck pain cannot be pin pointed. However, it is important to exclude serious and treatable conditions such as nerve compression, tumour, infection and fracture.



It is important to seek medical advice if your neck pain is severe and does not go away after a few weeks. Seek immediate attention if neck pain is accompanied by high fever, weight loss, difficulty walking and abnormal bowel and bladder movements.

## What causes neck pain?

Stress and emotional tension can cause muscles to tighten and result in pain and stiffness. Sleeping in a wrong position can also put strain on your joints to cause neck pain when you awake. Poor posture, obesity, and weak abdominal muscles also often disrupt the spine's balance to cause the neck to bend uncomfortably to compensate. Sporting activities may also cause neck sprains and strains to result in pain.

### **Degenerative Disc Disease (DDD)**

In DDD, the intervertebral discs become less-hydrated and lose their flexibility, elasticity, and shock-absorbing abilities to develop a bulging or herniated disc. Nerve roots can be compressed by the disc material to cause neck pain, and radiate into the arm to cause a tingling sensation and/or numbness.

## What are the treatment options?

The majority of people with neck pain do not need surgery, and do get better with time.

### **Anti-Inflammatory medication and painkillers**

Anti-inflammatory medication can reduce the swelling of injured structures. Nerve compression may improve after swelling subsides. Painkillers are given to reduce pain as the body recovers. Chronic pain that is difficult to control with ordinary painkillers may require co-management with a pain specialist.



## **Physiotherapy**

Physical therapy will include passive and active treatments. Passive treatments, include deep tissue massage and hot and cold therapies to relax your body and prepare it for therapeutic exercise (the active part of physical therapy).

## **Acupuncture**

Acupuncture is effective in treating neck pain. In acupuncture, fine needles are inserted into specific points in your body to relieve pain.

## **Massage**

A lot of neck pain are caused by stress, overuse and misuse. Massage can help to release tension and relieve muscle inflammation and pain.

## **Yoga and Pilates**

Increase your core strength, improve your balance and posture, and reduce stress by doing yoga or Pilates.

## **Spine Injection for Neck Pain**

A spine injection containing steroids is introduced to the nerve roots or facet joints to break the cycle of inflammation and pain. It is performed under X-ray guidance for accurate placement of the injection. Such injections are given to patients who do not get better with the above treatments.

## **Surgery**

Less than 5% of people with neck pain require surgery. Surgery is used when:

- Non-surgical treatments, such as medication and physical therapy do not help
- Neck pain that is caused by an infection, tumour or fracture of the spine
- You experience progressive neurological symptoms (pain, numbness, tingling and weakness) that affect your arms. This may be caused by nerve root compression. Surgery aims to decompress the nerve to help it recover
- You have trouble with balance or walking. This may be caused by spinal cord compression. Surgery aims to relieve the compression in the spinal cord to prevent deterioration

## For more information

### Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and Jurong Community Hospital

1 Jurong East St 21, Singapore 609606

General enquiries: 6716 2000 Fax: 6716 5500

[www.ntfgh.com.sg](http://www.ntfgh.com.sg)

[www.jch.com.sg](http://www.jch.com.sg)

## Clinic opening hours

Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5.30pm, Saturday 8.30am – 12.30pm

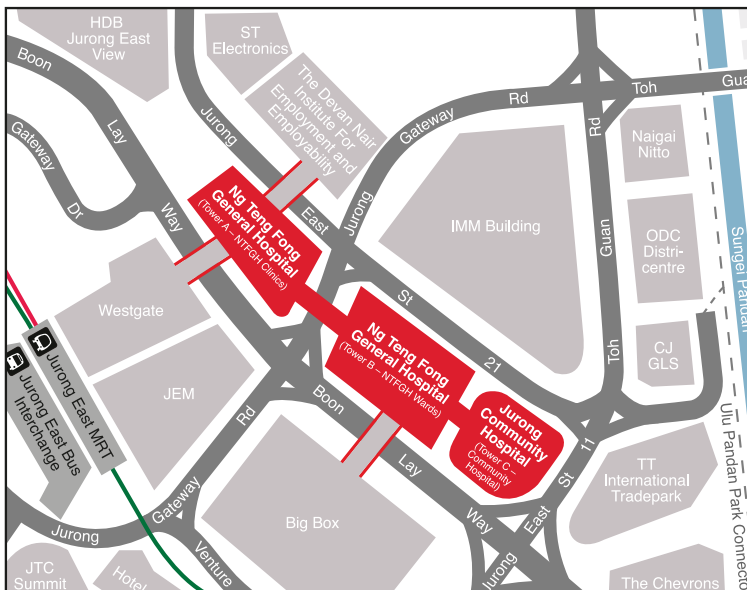
Dental clinic: Monday – Thursday 8.00am – 5.30pm, Friday 8.00am – 5.00pm

## Appointments

Appointment line: 6716 2222

Dental appointment line: 6716 2233

## Getting there



## By train

Jurong East MRT Station

## By bus

### From Jurong East Bus Interchange

41, 49, 51, 52, 66, 66B, 78, 78A, 79, 79A, 97, 97E, 98, 98M, 105, 143, 143M, 160, 183, 183B, 197, 333, 334, 335, 506

### Along Boon Lay Way

99, Private bus service 625, 990

## Disclaimer:

The information in this brochure is meant for educational purposes and should not be used as substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Please seek your doctor's advice before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical condition.