

# Chronic Neck Pain *PainChecker*<sup>®</sup>

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## Red Flags (T.I.N.T)?

- Tumour;  Infection/Inflammation;  Neurological;  Trauma (T.I.N.T);  Torticollis;  Vascular;  Spine instability (RhA);  25 < Age > 60;  Cancer history;  Steroid history;  IVDU  other.....

- |   |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> MRI  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blood tests (inc ESR, CRP)                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> *Neuro deficit = urgent neurosurgical review |

## Yellow flags? (C.H.A.M.P.S) (predicts chronic pain & disability).

- Catastrophizing;  Hypervigilant;  Anxiety;  Medically-focused;  Passive-coping;  Stress;  Substance (medication) overuse;  Sick of work (workplace dissatisfaction);  Motor vehicle injury.

## Whiplash-associated neck pain.

- Severe radicular arm pain;  neurological signs.

- |   |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> MRI or CT scan |
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## Headaches Cervicogenic; Migraine; Medication-overuse (rebound).

## Simple pain generators?

- Neck & shoulder pain (trapezius trigger points) → trigger point LA injection or 'dry needling' & physiotherapy.

- Interscapular pain (rhomboid trigger points) → trigger point LA injection or 'dry needling' & physiotherapy.

- Neck pain & headache (greater occipital neuralgia [GON]) → LA/steroid GON nerve block.

- Pain education & key messages:  Handouts;  Realistic outcomes;  Functional goals;  Reassurance (x-ray findings);  'Hurt ≠ harm';  *painHEALTH* website;  Pain programme.

- Multimodal analgesia (\* useful for radicular pain):  Paracetamol;  Tramadol\*;  Tapentadol\*;  
 Transdermal buprenorphine;  Duloxetine\*;  Pregabalin\*;  Celecoxib or NSAID gel (flare-ups).

- Physical therapies:  Activity pacing;  Walking & exercise;  Ergonomics;  Trigger-points;  TENS;  Hot/cold pack.

- Psychosocial care:  Anxiety;  PTSD (post-MVA);  Depression;  Sleep;  Clinical psychology;  Rehabilitation;  Compensation issues.

## Other pain generators?

- Neck pain & headache (GON or C2/3 facet joint) → GON pulsed RF treatment or cryoneurotomy, OR C2/3 facet steroid injection, OR C2/3 (3<sup>rd</sup> occipital nerve) radiofrequency neurotomy.

- Neck pain radiating into shoulders (C5/6 facet joint) → C5/6 facet steroid injection or radiofrequency neurotomy.

- Radicular arm pain → MRI/CT to confirm nerve root compression.

- DO NOT order cervical nerve root sleeve or epidural steroid injection (↓benefit ↑risk).

- Consult specialist pain medicine physician or neuro/spinal surgeon.

- Neuromodulation or cervical spine surgery → seek specialist advice.

Review plan → Recycle through check list