

Cervical Vertebra Syndrome

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Cervical Vertebra Syndrome (CVS) is one of most common bone and joint problems in the elderly. The causes of this syndrome are intervertebral disc degeneration, spur development, facet joint dislocation, torn ligaments and calcification. They may be impacted and may compress the cervical nerve roots, cervical vertebral artery, sympathetic nerve node or spinal cord causing a wide range of different problems in individual cases.

For example:

- (1) Strong headache and arm pain can occur if the cervical nerve root is compressed by a prolapsed disc or a dislocated facet joint. Muscles are likely to stiffen and gradually become sore if there is an osteological spur.
- (2) Dizziness, blurred vision, the hearing disorder tinnitus, decline in eyesight and loss of memory can occur if the cervical vertebral artery is compressed.
- (3) If the sympathetic nerve node is affected, pain can occur in the occiput and eye socket, excess tears can be produced. Poor vision, palpitation, nausea and chest pain can also occur.
- (4) Numbness, gradually muscular atrophy and weakness of a limb may occur if a spur or intervertebral disc protrudes into the spinal cord. In such cases, discomfort in the lower limbs is likely to occur earlier than in the upper limbs but the pain in the neck is generally not as severe.

Some patients may develop only one of these symptoms but, in complicated cases, some may develop two or three symptoms at the same time.

The use of Chinese medicine has produced good results in the treatment of CVS. Generally patients recover quickly and the recovery rate is high (about 95 %). Traditional Chinese therapies should be the first option for CVS, except in severe cases where there is protrusion into the spinal cord.

Tuina technique (Chinese therapeutic massage, acupressure and manipulation) is favoured by the author as the first therapy to be used when treating CVS. The author considers it most important to loosen muscles before manipulation of the neck and he is emphatic that the force of manipulation cannot be too strong or rough. Cases where the spinal cord is severely compressed must only be treated with vertical traction or surgery; manipulation must be avoided, especially “turning of the head”. If manipulation is improperly applied, it could be life-threatening.

Acupuncture and the application of herbal patches should also be considered. Acupuncture can loosen stiffened soft tissues, improve blood circulation, reduce swelling and relieve pain. If there are both swelling and pain, **Greatpatch-S** should be applied to assist in the reduction of the inflammation of local soft tissue, reduction of swelling and the relief of pain. If there is stiffness, coldness, numbness and soreness but no swelling, **Greatpatch-A** should be applied to improve local blood circulation, to warm soft tissues and to relax stiffened muscles.

Chinese herbs, individual formulated and taken orally, can also benefit patients suffering with CVS.