



## DOES STRESS CAUSE NECK PAIN?

Does stress cause neck pain? The short answer is no! At G3 Physical Therapy, 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 therapists 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.

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.

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# NUTRITION TIPS

## RECIPE FOR SUCCESS WITH SALAD JARS:

What do you eat for lunch? Do you want something healthy and easy? One way to set yourself up for success is to prepare ahead of time. One thing I love to do is to make salad jars. And here is what I like to do...

1. Pick a recipe, one of my favorites is Giada De Laurentiis' beet and goat cheese arugula salad. But I substitute goat cheese for feta cheese.
2. Prep 5 quart size, wide mouth mason jars, cleaned and dried for each week day.
3. Gather all the ingredients for the salad and follow the recipe below.
4. Once you have made the dressing and roasted the beets you can start assembling the jars.
5. Always start with the dressing at the bottom.
6. Followed by heaviest ingredients first on the bottom to lightest on top. For this recipe, it would be in this order: beets, avocados (I squeeze lemon juice on them to keep them from browning too much), walnuts, feta cheese, and arugula on top.
7. Put the lid on and you can now just grab and go. When you are ready to eat, shake the jar to mix the dressing and don't forget a fork. And enjoy!!!

Optional: I usually make extra protein for dinner, whether it's chicken, steak, or even hard boiled eggs, these are great options to add to your salad.

Also optional: to add extra nutrients and flavor, I'll add sprouted microgreens or roast other vegetables to add to the salad.



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## 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 therapists 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., educating you about managing your symptoms. Your program will likely include manual therapy (i.e., soft tissue work and/or joint mobilizations), stretches & exercises that will help restore alignment and posture.

*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!



Visit Us Online [g3.life](http://g3.life)

**SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY!**

**760.452.2640**



# STAFF SPOTLIGHT: ULICES VAZQUEZ SOTO, PT, DPT



Uly was born and raised in San Diego and grew up playing soccer, which is where he really began to appreciate movement and the ability of the body to adapt to the demand. Uly enjoys hiking, running, playing soccer, skateboarding, surfing and is currently training to run the Rim to Rim. He got into this profession of PT because he enjoys getting to meet different individuals and being a part of their healing journey. He has been there himself so he understands and relates to others that are recovering from injuries.

## WE GET RESULTS

“G3 is first class when it comes to therapy and personal attention. They truly care about the whole individual and it is evident in every way. They listen to the patient and hone in on their goals. They are innovative and focused. I could not have had a better experience and results!!”

-Hully H.

## EXERCISE ESSENTIALS

### May 2024 Exercise: The High Step Thru

The High Step Thru stretch helps to open up your anterior chain. The anterior chain is our way of describing an “area” as opposed to saying you are only stretching your “pect” muscle, the anterior chain includes a group of muscles, joints, fascia that work together. When doing this dynamic stretch, the movement helps a lot of things, but 2 specific things are. First, it creates blood flow to warm your tissue to increase healing and improve flexibility. Second, it creates muscle memory for your body to learn how to maintain flexibility and stability to improve your alignment and posture, which will help biomechanically take stress off your neck.

We recommend you do these stretches slowly and continuously for 10 repetitions x 2 sets, especially if you are sitting a lot, try to do these every hour.



1. Start with your arm at 90 degree angle with the forearm resting on the door frame.
2. Step into the doorway with the foot on the same side as the holding arm.
3. Return back to the starting position and repeat 10 times on each side.

## WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR SUCCESS STORY!

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

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