



# HEAD, NECK and JAW PAIN

PROVEN METHODS TO ELIMINATE THE  
HEAD, NECK AND JAW PAIN THAT  
STOPS YOU FROM ENJOYING THE  
ACTIVITIES YOU LOVE... NATURALLY



**DR. MATTHEW HARKNESS**

# STOP HEAD, NECK and JAW PAIN

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By DR. MATTHEW HARKNESS

Southwest Florida's specialist  
on Head, Neck and Jaw Health

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## About the Author

### Dr. Matthew Harkness

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*Head, Neck and Jaw Pain  
Therapy Specialist*



Dr. Matthew Harkness is a Physical Therapist specializing in the treatment of Head, Neck and Jaw disorders. Dr. Harkness holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Movement Science from Gordon College, a Master of Physical Therapy Degree from Nova Southeastern University and post-graduate Manual Therapy Certification from the University of St Augustine of Health Sciences. He later received his Doctorate in Physical Therapy from the Evidence in Motion Health Sciences program. Dr. Harkness is a board-certified Athletic Trainer with specialty training in Sports Medicine and has worked with NFL and collegiate athletes, helping to speed their return to elite athletic competition.

As an entrepreneur, Dr. Harkness has cultivated a passion for developing leaders and encouraging others to achieve their maximum potential. He is a certified facilitator of “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,” and is the founder of Allied Physical Therapy and The APT Leadership Institute.

As a former Motocross racer participating in the New England Championship Series (NESC), Dr. Harkness enjoyed the challenge of competition despite experiencing many injuries – which led to a career helping others to overcome their injuries. Today, Dr. Harkness continues to be an avid road and mountain cyclist and participates in several tours each year. He has four active and beautiful children and enjoys spending time with them and his wife, Dr. Melissa Harkness.

## HEALTH ADVICE DISCLAIMER

The information provided in this report is intended for your general knowledge only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment for specific medical conditions. You should not use this information to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease without consulting with a qualified healthcare provider. Please consult your healthcare provider with any questions or concerns you may have regarding your condition.

However, examples of injuries and their prognosis are based on typical representations of those injuries that we commonly see in our physical therapy clinic. The information given is not intended as representations of every individual's potential injury. As with any injury, each person's symptoms can vary widely and each person's recovery from injury can also vary depending upon background, genetics, previous medical history, application of exercises, posture, motivation to follow physical therapy advice and various other physical factors.

It is impossible to give a 100% complete accurate diagnosis and prognosis without a thorough physical examination. Likewise, the advice given for management of an injury cannot be deemed fully accurate in the absence of this examination from one of the Physical Therapy Specialists.

Significant injury risk is possible if you do not follow due diligence and seek suitable professional advice about your injury.

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# Introduction

If you're one of the millions of Americans who suffer from chronic or ongoing head, neck and jaw pain, you know how the slogan "pain in the neck," became synonymous with sources of gnawing annoyance. Headaches, jaw pain, neck and shoulder muscle tension, pain with movement, lack of sleep due to snoring or pain, asthma, hay fever, nasal congestion, anxiety or fatigue – these are just a few of the many ways that problems with the structure of the neck and head can manifest throughout your body.

According to James Friction, Professor Emeritus, Department of Diagnostic and Biological Sciences at the University of Minnesota's School of Dentistry, about 40% of annual consumer spending for the treatment of chronic pain is spent on head and neck pain remedies alone. Affecting 10 percent of all adults over the age of 18, head and neck pain disproportionately affects women 2 to 1, with symptoms of temporomandibular joint dysfunction affecting an estimated 50 to 75 percent of all people with head and neck pain.

Yet, only 3 to 4 percent of those who suffer will seek medical attention for their head and neck pain. And those people will usually head straight to their physician or emergency treatment center, leading to treatment that is often expensive, confusing and ineffective. If drugs, breathing machines, expensive imaging tests, and surgery don't sound like your idea of fun – you should know that other – often more effective – treatment options are available. And you don't need to see a physician for a referral.

Although there will be times when traditional medical treatment methods will be necessary, you should know that such times are actually rare. A Doctor of Physical therapy who is specialty trained in the treatment of head, neck and breathing difficulties can help minimize discomfort with conservative, non-invasive, effective treatments focused on lifestyle changes.

In most cases, an expert physical therapist, specialty trained in the treatment of head, neck and jaw pain, can help you obtain relief without the use of drugs or invasive surgeries. In this book, I will let you in on a few strategies that you can try at home to relieve or eliminate your suffering and get started on the path to wellness – so you can get back to doing what you love.



Of course, these strategies address the most common causes of head, neck and jaw pain that we see in the clinic each day and may or may not apply to you and your current condition. Even when the root causes of pain is known, there is no guarantee that any one therapeutic strategy is going to work. Therefore, if you are still experiencing pain after a few weeks, we urge you to make an appointment so that we can personally assess you and your situation. Although physical therapy may not offer the quick fix so many people are seeking – a commitment to getting better and following your program can lead to a lifetime of pain-free wellness. You only have one body – and you owe it to yourself to keep it in optimum working order!

Disclaimers<sup>1</sup> aside, these tips, when followed as prescribed, are very often successful in relieving the most common head, neck and jaw pain. Just imagine.... you may no longer need to take painkillers to get through the work day, or to get a good night's rest. Imagine getting your life back – without the head, neck and jaw pain that always seems to dampen even the most exciting life events – without drugs and without expensive and invasive surgeries.

*1. See full disclaimer on page v*

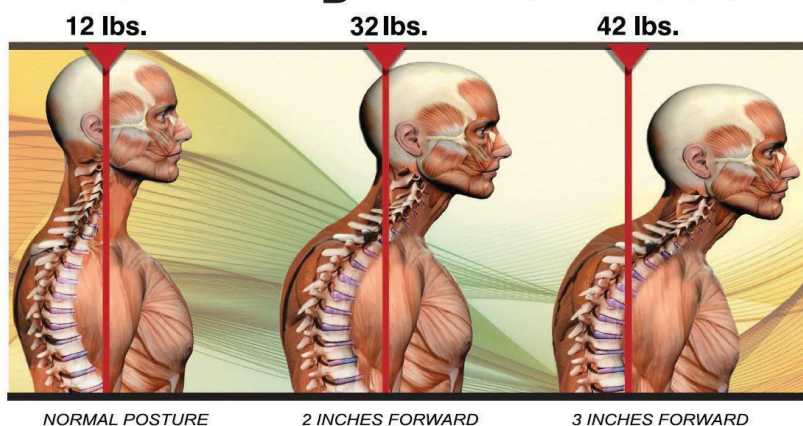
# STOP HEAD, NECK and JAW PAIN

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## 1 Perfect Your Posture

Your head weighs a lot. And its perch atop a much narrower, shorter and thinner supporting structure – the neck – makes the entire skeletal and muscular system in that area a prime location for chronic pain. Of course, this is exacerbated by today's current cell phone epidemic. Did you know that looking down at your phone can put up to 42 pounds of extra pressure on the disks of the neck and spine (see picture), causing compression that leads to neck pain and severe headaches?

### How Heavy is Your Head?



### 42 Pound Head

*"For every inch of Forward Head Posture, it can increase the weight of the head on the spine by an additional 10 pounds."*

Kapandji, Physiology of Joints, Vol. 3



Short of chucking your cell phone down the nearest rabbit hole, there are things that you can do to lessen the effect of cell phone use on your head and neck – and maintaining an excellent posture can go a long way in alleviating pain.

Chronic poor posture puts a large amount of pressure and tension on the neck and spine, resulting in damage to bones, soft tissues and muscle strain, leading to aches and pains. When your head is in good alignment with your body, it is able to rotate to the left and right with the least amount of difficulty, allowing for flexibility, mobility and relaxation of the surrounding muscles.

## How to Check Your Posture



To check your posture, cut a length of string about 10 inches and hold one end to the most prominent bony part of your cheek. With your head held in good posture, the other end of the string should touch your breast bone. If it dangles, your head is too far forward.

## Things to Try

### 1. Support:

Use a lumbar roll (pictured at right) or pillow while sitting to support your back and keep your spine in alignment with your hips.



### 2. Self-Awareness:

Pay attention to the way you are sitting or standing while working. Make sure your head is in optimal alignment with your body; shoulders over hips. Shift weight from side to side while standing. Do not rest your chin in your hands. Use a wireless headset. Wear supportive footwear – ditch those flip flops, heels and flats for actual shoes that support your feet and arches.

### 3. Breathing and Relaxation:



The greatest nation is your imagination! Put it to work for you. We could all use a little relaxation in our pursuit of a pain-free life. Stress causes muscle tension, and muscle tension causes pain. So, become conscious of your breathing. Imagine yourself at your favorite place.

## Sitting Posture



You already know that slouching, at left, is bad. But so is sitting with an unsupported back in an erect, tense position.



Using a lumbar roll/ cushion while seated will help maintain a good posture by providing a good support for your spine allowing your muscles to relax.



In the absence of armrests (arm support), you may rest your shoulders and your upper back by putting your forearms on one or two cushions (or pillows) placed on your thighs. Your feet rest flat on the ground or on a small stool (ankles at 90°).



## 2 Breathe Easy

Are you breathing properly? You may not even think about breathing at all, as it really is an involuntary body system, much like your heart beating. However, HOW you breathe can impact the rest of your body systems in a variety of negative – and positive – ways, depending on how you're breathing.

Did you know that breathing predominantly through your mouth can cause all kinds of adverse effects throughout the body? Usually resulting from nasal congestion due to chronic allergies, mouth-breathing can lead to negative effects on the spine, teeth, and jaw. And mouth breathers also suffer a loss of abdominal muscle tone because they no longer use their diaphragm to full effect.

As if all that isn't enough, mouth breathers also must lower their tongue, stick their necks out and put their heads into bad posture alignments in an effort to increase air flow – which can lead to a collapse of the structure holding the teeth, as well as increased pressure on the head, neck and spine.

### Things to Try

#### 1. Nasal Breathing:

Breathing through the nose not only increases the amount of oxygen in your body, it warms and humidifies the air, filters out allergens, removes significant amounts of germs and bacteria and maintains good gum health by preventing the drying of the mouth and gums. It also helps to eliminate snoring and disruption of sleep and promotes abdominal strength by promoting diaphragmatic breathing.



## 2. Good Breathing:

Always sit with proper posture and lumbar support with the jaw properly aligned with the breast bone. This opens the airway, allowing you to breathe without holding your head or neck in bad or stressful positions. Hold your tongue at the roof of your mouth with your teeth slightly parted (start to say “no,” or “neat,” and you will find the proper tongue and teeth position). Take nice, steady nasal breaths without over-breathing. Yawning or sighing is a sign of over-breathing, so swallow to make that urge go away. Lastly, put a 2” inch piece of masking tape over your mouth before bed to train your mouth to stay closed while you sleep.

## 3 Avoiding Headaches

The most common type of medical ailment is headache, with more than 45 million Americans experiencing some kind of head pain each year – leading to billions of dollars in lost productivity.

### Tension Headaches:

The most common type of headache among teens and adults is tension headache – affecting an estimated 80 to 90 percent of the population at some time in their lives. Most tension headaches are caused by stress, anxiety, depression and pain that occurs in the head due to sensitivity in a muscle elsewhere in the body. These headaches are generally characterized by dull, non-pulsating pain that occurs all over the head and may give victims a feeling of wearing a tight cap. These mild-to-moderate-pain headaches are usually not aggravated by activity and can last anywhere between 30 minutes and two and a half days.



## Migraine Headaches:

These affect about 16 percent of all headache sufferers and are characterized by pulsing moderate-to-severe pain, typically on one side of the head. These headaches can cause nausea and vomiting and extreme sensitivity to light and loud noises. Although these headaches can strike at any time, they are often triggered by certain foods, alcohol, or exposure to bright lights and loud music. Migraine headaches can last for three or four days and are made worse by activity.

## Nose and Sinus Headaches:

These affect about 15% of all headache sufferers. Characterized by feeling of pressure due to sinus congestion, resulting in fascial pain, feeling of pressure and pounding sensation at forehead with position changes.

Although it is sometimes difficult to pinpoint the exact cause of headaches, there are some techniques that you can try to lessen their severity – or prevent the occurrence of headaches all together. And rest easy – only one percent of all headaches are caused by a serious underlying medical condition.

## Things to Try

### 1. Neck Stretching:

Particularly useful for tension headaches, stretching of the neck muscles helps to alleviate the pain by loosening muscles that have contracted in response to pain.

### Front Neck Stretch



Sit and place both hands over the collarbone on the affected side. Pull it down towards floor gently with hands. Raise your chin and lean your head sideways away from hands until a stretch is felt along the side of the neck. Maintain the stretch hold about 10 seconds and repeat two or three times.





## Neck Stretch

Place one hand behind your buttock to lower your shoulder. Turn your head to the opposite side and look down.

Gently pull down on your head with the other hand and maintain the position when you feel a stretching sensation. Hold for about 10 seconds, repeat two or three times.



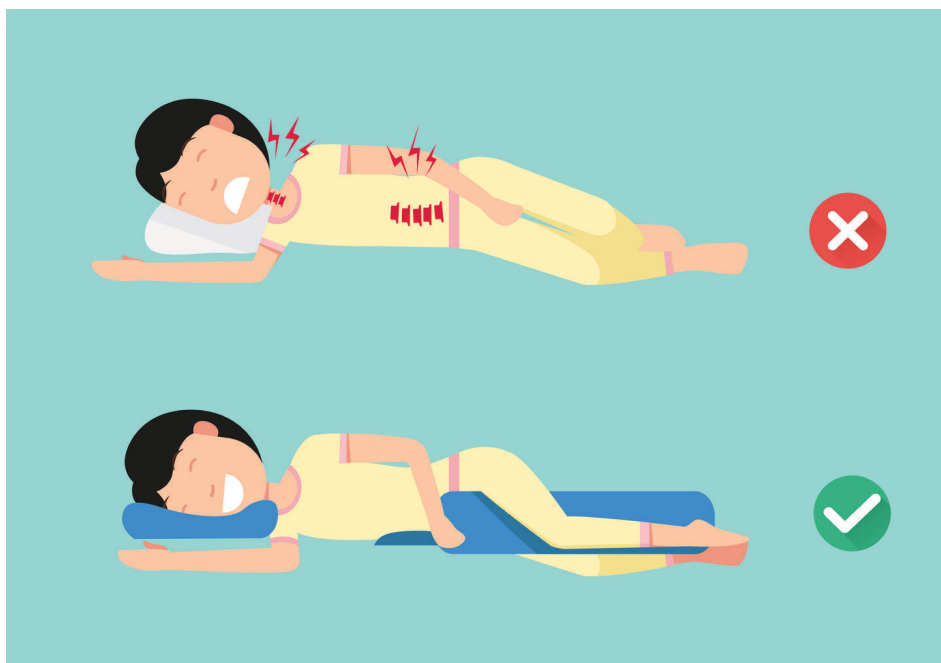
## Neck Rotation



Sit in a chair with upright posture support at your low back and look over your right shoulder as far as possible without moving your body. Repeat to the left side. Hold three to five seconds and repeat three to six times.

## 2. Proper Sleeping Posture:

For those who tend to wake with a headache, it is important to sleep in a position that supports your head and neck, creating a straight line from your head and neck down through your spine. A small cylindrical pillow placed in the crook of your neck will offer support without elevating the head out of line with the body.



## 3. Nasal Breathing:

Just breathing purposefully through your nose will go a long way toward healing to reduce sinus pressure and congestion that can often lead to headache pain. See [\*Nasal Breathing\*](#), page 7.

## 4. Exercise:

Just walking 30 minutes each day can help to ward off headaches by getting your blood circulating and stretching out tense muscles.

## 5. Limit Sitting:

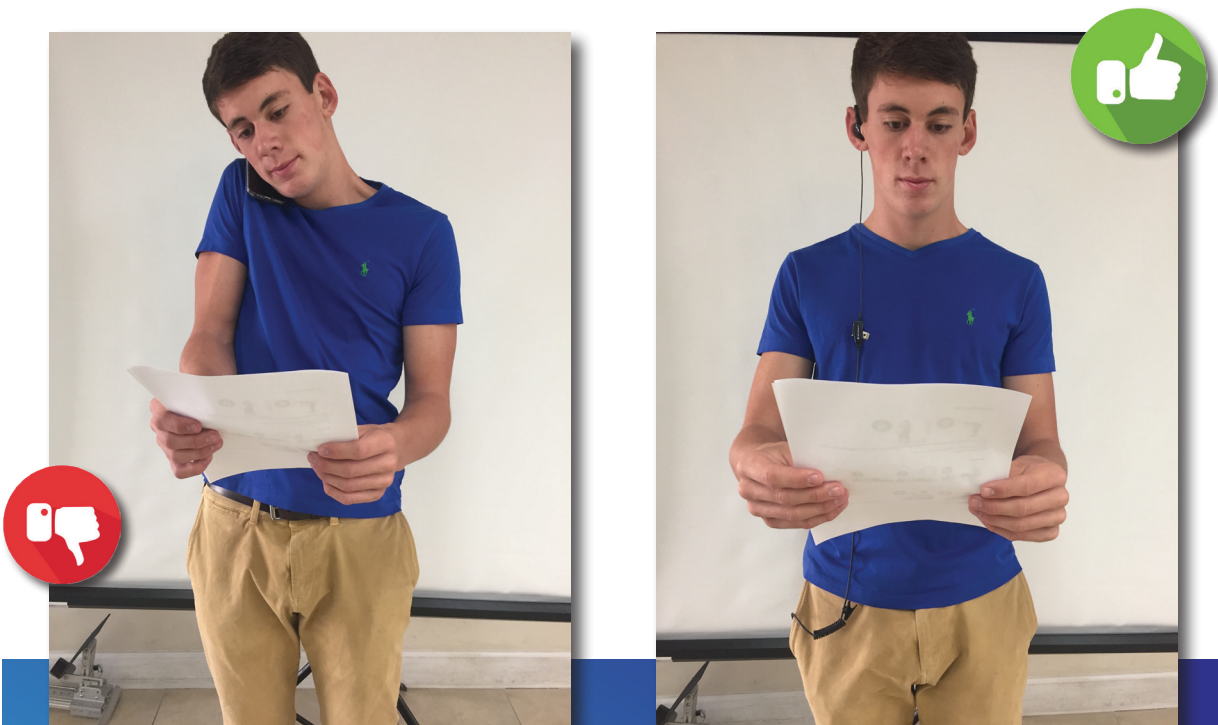
Sitting compresses your spine and soft tissues, which can lead to tense muscles and tension headaches. You should never sit at your desk or on the sofa for more than 30 minutes at a time without getting up and moving. See [\*Sitting Posture\*](#), page 6.

## 6. Balance Arm Use:

Try to use both of your arms, hands and wrists when performing home- or work-related activities.

## 7. Avoid the Phone:

Use a bluetooth device or headphones to carry on conversations so your neck and head are not placed in unnatural positions. Avoid looking down at your phone screen.



Do not cradle your phone between your shoulder and ear. Use a headset, headphones or a bluetooth device. Tilt your mobile device, book or magazine, keep your head straight and your shoulders relaxed and maintain a good sitting position.

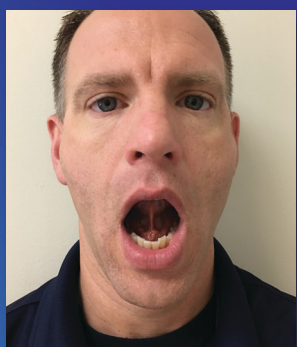
## 4 Alleviate Jaw Pain

Jaw pain, known commonly as TMJ disorder or dysfunction, affects an estimated six to 12 percent of Americans, disproportionately affecting twice as many women than men. Although jaw pain can result from trauma to the jaw caused by injuries or tooth extractions, it is much more commonly caused by improper posture when using the computer or watching television, teeth clenching and grinding, biting of the nails, cheeks and lips, stress, chewing gum, resting your chin on your fist, and playing a musical instrument.

Many people who suffer from constant, dull jaw pain also report additional symptoms such as excess salivation, runny nose, watery eyes, sensitivity to light, nausea, and ringing in the ears. Many also experience clicking sounds while talking or chewing, although locking of the jaw is pretty rare and can usually be attributed to a more serious involvement of the disc, or cushion, in the jaw joint.

### Things to Try

#### Controlled Jaw Stretch



Rest your tongue on the roof of your mouth just behind your front teeth and open your mouth as far as you can without losing contact between your tongue and the roof of your mouth. Avoid pain. Hold 3 to 5 seconds and repeat 3 to 6 times.

#### 1. STOP chewing gum, nails, lips and cheeks:

This constant habitual movement of the jaw puts a strain on surrounding muscles and tissues, leading to pain.

#### 2. Stretch Jaw:

Stretching is especially important when having dental work done. Ask your dentist if you can stop for a break to stretch your jaw every three minutes or so, when possible.

#### 3. Maintain a Proper Posture:

Sitting with a proper posture will allow the muscles of the jaw to relax, thereby decreasing pain.



## 5 See a Head, Neck and Breathing Physical Therapist Specialist

There really is no better way to help alleviate your head, neck and jaw pain. When seeing a qualified physical therapist specializing in treatment of the head, neck and jaw, they will be able to detect the root and source of your annoying and debilitating pain and plan your treatment accordingly, helping you to get better faster. In return, you will be able to carry on with your life, avoid taking pain pills, live without fear, and get back to exercising and working.

### More Things to Try

There are a million different ways in which the things we do every day effect our bodies – both good and bad. Although it is impossible to touch on everything we should be doing to prevent injury and promote optimal health and well-being, there are a few common things we should consider adjusting:

#### Coughing / Sneezing



When coughing or sneezing, avoid abruptly bending forward.

## Computer Use

Here are 10 criteria to consider for an optimal and ergonomic workstation adjustment (setting):

1. Shoulders relaxed
2. Arms close to the body (trunk) and elbows at approximately  $90^\circ$
3. Forearms resting on armrest or on the working surface
4. Wrists in neutral position and hands aligned with forearms
5. Back straight with the lower portion of the back pressing against the chair back (or resting on it for support)
6. Thighs parallel to the floor
7. Clearance corresponding to the width of 2 or 3 fingers between the back of the knees and the seat of the chair
8. Feet resting on the floor or on a footrest (ankles at  $90^\circ$ )
9. Eye-screen distance corresponding to one arm's length or a minimal distance of 60 cm (19 inches)
10. Head up and eyes looking forward most of the time at the upper portion of the screen (the upper 1/3 of the screen)





## Conclusion

Head, neck and jaw pain can be an expensive and frustrating experience for all patients. Using the strategies listed in this book, you may experience some relief, or you may eliminate your head, neck and jaw pain once and for all. These are just a few of the most common approaches to head, neck and jaw pain treatments, among a plethora of effective therapies. If you apply these strategies daily, you may very well see a decrease – or even disappearance – of the head, neck and jaw pain that has been keeping you from enjoying your life, and ultimately get you back to doing what you love to do.

I hope this is just the beginning of a relationship between you and me and the rest of my physical therapy team. As your local area expert, I hope to become your trusted guide in managing and overcoming your aches and pains.

Getting You Back To What You Love,

*Dr. Matthew Harkness,*

Head, Neck and Jaw Pain Specialist Physical Therapist

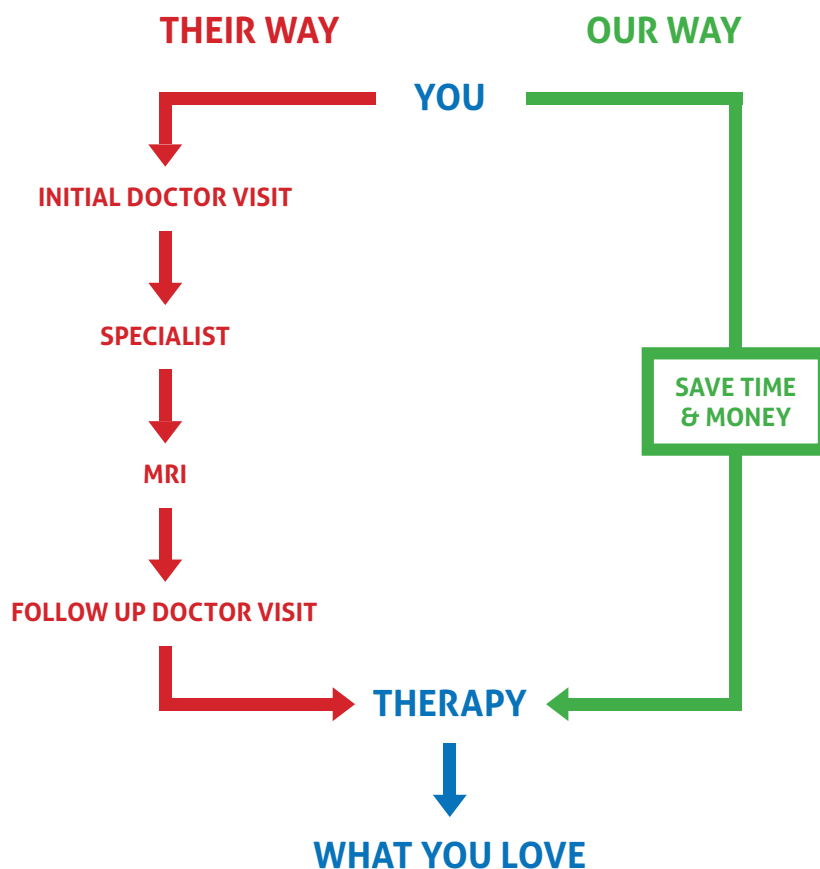
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## Real Patients, Real Results



“I wish I knew then what I know now! I could have saved time, energy, pain and money if I’d gone to Allied first. Besides being knowledgeable professionals, they knew exactly what was wrong – and more importantly – how to fix it.”

~ Tammy Z.  
Cape Coral, Florida



“I no longer have numbness, tingling and weakness in my hands.”

~ Nancy N.  
Cape Coral, Florida



“I have had eight surgeries on my neck and back and I am now able to move my neck again and no longer have to take pain pills.”

~ Chrissy T.  
Fort Myers, Florida