

What is Cervical Spondylosis?

Almost 90% of adults over 60 have cervical spondylosis.

1 Introduction

Cervical spondylosis (CS) is a general term for age-related wear that affects the joints and discs in the vertebrae of the cervical spine (neck area). Types of wear attributed to CS include gradual cartilage deterioration, herniated (cracked) or dehydrated discs, stiffened ligaments and bone spurs. CS can be sometimes diagnosed by simple physical examinations that check the patient's neck flexibility, muscle strength (in hands, arms or legs), reflexes or gait. However, in some cases, doctors may order an X-ray, CT scan or MRI to provide conclusive results.

2 Signs and Symptoms

Although many people with CS do not have significant symptoms, those who do typically experience:

- Neck pain and/or stiffness
- Muscle weakness and pain from shoulder blade to hands
- Tingling and numbness in shoulders and arms
- Headaches at the back of the head
- Dizziness or lack of coordination

3 Risk Factors

Cervical spondylosis is most commonly attributed to aging. Though, there are some additional factors that may increase the risk of developing CS, including:

- Having an occupation that involves straining the neck (e.g. painters, flooring installers)
- Neck injury
- Smoking
- Family history of CS
- Obesity
- Physical inactivity

5 Treatments

Treatments for cervical spondylosis generally focus on managing pain and lowering the risk of permanent damage. A common intervention option for CS is physical therapy. Physical therapy will help to increase muscle mass and strength in the neck and shoulder area as well as relieve pain. OTC medications can also be used to help reduce pain and inflammation. Doctors may also prescribe medication if the OTC drugs are not working for the patient. While most people with CS do not require surgical intervention, in severe cases, spine surgery may be suggested to remove bone spurs or herniated discs.

Did you know?

By the age of 40, most people's spinal discs begin drying out and shrinking.

For more information on cervical spondylosis and supportive resources, please visit www.orthoinfo.org.

References:

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/17685-cervical-spondylosis>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/cervical-spondylosis>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cervical-spondylosis/symptoms-causes/>