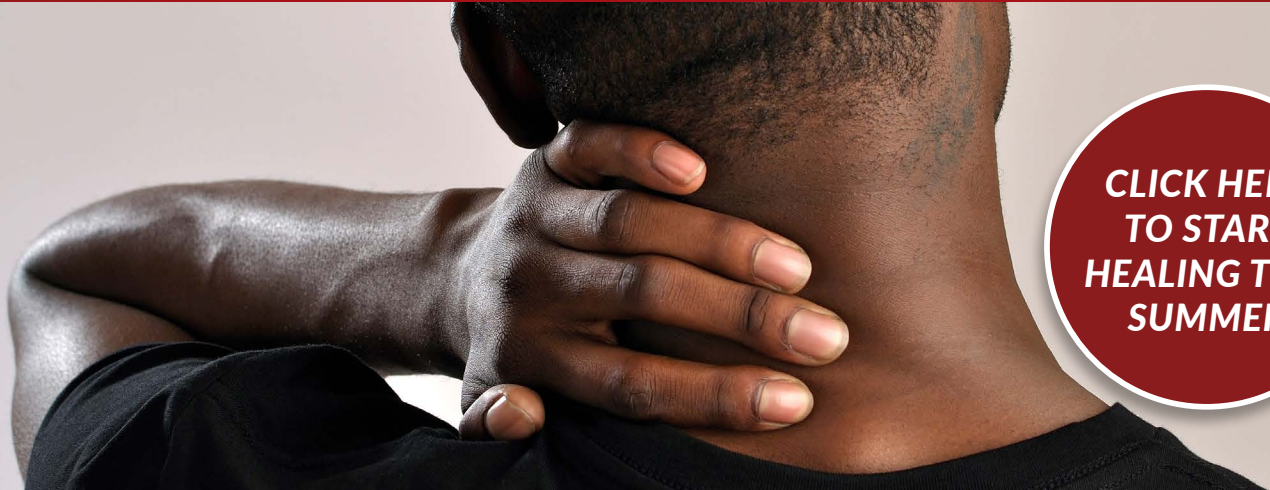




# HEALTH & WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

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SUMMER](#)

## Does Stress Cause Neck Pain?

Does stress cause neck pain? The short answer is no! At Ellis 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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## 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., and educating you about managing your symptoms. Your program will likely include manual therapy (i.e., soft tissue work and/or joint mobilizations), targeted stretches, exercises, activity modification, or posture recommendations. 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!

Sources: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S183695320301417?via%3Dihub>  
• <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36180150/> • <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2270377/> • <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28972599/>

## HEALTHY ENERGY BITES

- 1/2 c peanut butter
- 1/4 c honey
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/3 c protein powder
- 1/3 cup flaxseed meal
- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 1 tbsp mini chocolate chips
- 1/4 c unsweetened shredded coconut



In the bowl of a food processor, add in the peanut butter, honey, vanilla, protein powder, flaxseed meal, oats, cinnamon and chia seeds. Pulse together until well combined. Add in chocolate chips (and coconut if using) and pulse a few more times. Use a medium cookie scoop or your hands to grab dough and roll into 10 balls, place in an airtight container. Store in the fridge for up to 1 week, or the freezer for up to 2 months. Enjoy!

<https://www.ambitiouskitchen.com/protein-peanut-butter-energy-bites/>

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# ARE YOU AWARE OF THE TRUE IMPORTANCE OF NUTRITION?

Your diet affects many aspects of your well-being including your immune system, bone health, muscle function, inflammation, and pain. Conditions including heart disease and diabetes are also impacted by dietary intake in both development as well as management.

As summer approaches, it can be difficult to keep good nutrition at the forefront of your mind, especially with barbeques and cookouts popping up everywhere you look!

If you need some help maintaining a healthy diet this season, take a look at these 6 nutrition tips:

## 1. Swap out snacks for fruits and vegetables

Every day, it is recommended that you consume at least 5 portions of a variety of fruits and vegetables. If this sounds challenging, remember that fresh, frozen, canned, dried, or even juiced fruits and veggies are all options.

## 2. Replace steak with fish

Fish is a great source of protein and contains many vitamins and minerals. You should try to incorporate at least 2 servings of fish in your diet every week.

## 3. Lessen your saturated fat intake

Did you know that too much saturated fat can raise your blood cholesterol levels, increasing your risk of developing heart disease?

**Examples of food rich in saturated fat include:**

- fatty cuts of meat
- cream
- sausages
- cakes
- butter
- biscuits
- hard cheeses

## 4. Cut down on sugary drinks

With the hot weather, it can be almost instinctive to reach for a cold soda out of the cooler. However, drinks high in sugar content can contribute to obesity and tooth decay.



Try opting for a cool refreshing glass of water instead, or a tasty fruit smoothie!

## 5. Make sure you're drinking enough water

Proper hydration is always important, but it becomes even more so during those hot summer months. It's recommended that you drink around 6 to 8 glasses of water a day.

## 6. Don't forget breakfast

A healthy breakfast should be a part of your daily routine. Eating breakfast sets the tone for your day and gives you the energy you need to make it to lunch!

We hope these tips will help you navigate this season and prioritize your health this summer!

## HOW ARE WE DOING?

Click below to tell your PT story and leave your review.



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**Office Hours:**

Mon. & Wed: 7 AM - 7 PM  
Tues. & Thurs: 8 AM - 6 PM  
Fri: 7 AM - 6 PM  
Closed: Sat - Sun

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