NOTE: These Care Paths identify typical courses of intervention. There may be patients who require more or less treatment. However, cases that deviate from the Care Paths may be subject to more careful scrutiny and may require documentation of the special circumstances. Treatments must be based on patient need and professional judgment. Deviations may be justified by individual circumstances, such as pre-existing conditions or comorbidities. The Care Paths are only intended for use when the injury was caused by a motor vehicle accident (MVA). If at any point in the decision making process the healthcare provider finds evidence that the injury was not caused by a MVA, the provider must contact the patient’s PIP carrier and medical insurance carrier.

CERVICAL SPINE SOFT TISSUE INJURY
(STRAIN/SPRAIN/CONTUSION WHIPLASH)
OF THE NECK

CONSERVATIVE THERAPY
(up to 4 weeks)
• Provider office visits (up to 5)
• Medications
• Consider soft neck collar (maximum 48 hours)
• Increasing exercise
• Consider PT program (2-3 times per week, up to 4 weeks)
• Spinal manipulation1 (1-3 visits per week, up to 4 weeks)

4 WEEKS POST INJURY
Improvement in symptoms based on objective findings?

YES
Symptoms Resolved
Discharge from Care

NO
Symptoms Minimally Resolved
Patient Compliant with Treatment Plan?

NO
Continue Conservative Therapy
• Begin or continue PT
• Consider Specialist Referral
• Consider Psychosocial Evaluation

YES
Continue Conservative Therapy
• Begin or continue PT
• Consider Specialist Referral
• Pain Management up to 3 visits (may include acupuncture)

Development of Radiculopathy?

NO
YES

Diagnostic Re-evaluation
May include:
• CBC
• ESR
• X-ray, CT, MRI
(if not previously done)
• Bone scan

1, 2, 3, 4 See Addendum to Care Paths
Test Result (-)

Re-Start Conservative Therapy
Specialist Referral
- Consider Psychosocial Evaluation
- Consider Pain Management Specialist Evaluation (may include acupuncture)
- Consider selective nerve root block

Improved within 8-12 weeks?

NO

Independent Consultative Opinion

Treatment Plan

Mandatory Case Management

YES

Discharge From Care

Treat Diagnosis

ICD-9 CODES
728.0
728.85
739.0
739.1
847.0
847.9
922.3
922.31
953.0

4 See Addendum to Care Paths

CARE PATH 1