

The Sink May Harm

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Hair-Washing in Salon Sinks May Harm Necks

Newark, NJ - Researchers report in the American Journal of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation that leaning your head back over a sink in a hair salon for a shampoo could result in a serious neck injury.

For example, when Michael Werner went to get his hair cut for the first time after his recovery from neck surgery, he never expected to be in pain for days afterward.

"I was in having my first haircut (after the operation) and I said, 'Bobby, you have to be gentle,'" said Warner, a 57-year-old former Administrator of Radiology at University Hospital in Newark, NJ. "But he wasn't gentle at all. When I got home, I could barely move my neck."

Warner suffers from cervical radiculopathy, a disorder that is commonly referred to as a "pinched nerve," which was aggravated from his shampoo in the salon sink. A common disorder, 85 in every 100,000 people will suffer from cervical radiculopathy. Although it is more common in older people, cervical radiculopathy can effect people at any age.

According to Dr. Todd Stitik, the New Jersey physiatrist who first reported on the connection between salon sinks and cervical radiculopathy in the July/August 1999 issue of the American Journal of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, cervical radiculopathy is usually caused by three main things: a herniated disc or discs in the neck and upper spine, arthritis, or whiplash and trauma which stretches the nerve," said Stitik

Stitik said the aggravation of these conditions occurs while one is getting a shampoo because of the positioning of the bones in the neck while reclining into the sink.

"In the office, we do a procedure called the Spurling Maneuver, which is the act of tilting the head back and slightly to the side, putting pressure on the side of the head," Stitik said. "Stylists often do this while the client is lying in the sink, which is bad because of the positioning of the neck in the sink. (Doctors) perform this maneuver while the patient is sitting up, which puts less pressure

on the neck."

Stitik's partner and co-author, Scott Nadler, DO, said the pressure is caused by the narrowing of the canal around the spine which puts pressure on the vertebrae and thus causes pain.