

# Improving Patient Outcomes: **Find relief from T4 Syndrome with Physiotherapy**

**Do you have patients  
complaining of arm pain,  
numbness and headaches  
that won't go away?**

If you do it is very likely that they are suffering from a common and often misdiagnosed clinical condition - T4 Syndrome. This condition in its early stages is characterised by a feeling of upper thoracic or lower cervical stiffness and pain with referred arm symptoms. In its early stages T4 syndrome may be diagnosed as an upper back or thoracic strain.

On examination there is pain and hypomobility in the intervertebral, facet and costovertebral joints. Clinically there is a pattern that also includes upper extremity paraesthesia and pain with or without symptoms into the neck and/or headaches.

These headaches are often described as being a fluffy or fuzzy feeling, similar to cotton wool in the ears, or a band around the head, much like a tension headache.

Symptoms are of insidious onset and can be quite severe. Other common conditions which present with a very similar pattern of pain which may mimic T4 syndrome are cervical nerve root pathologies, carpal tunnel syndrome, RC pathology or even cardiac events which of course need to be excluded.

Poor postural alignment and thoracic intervertebral joint hypomobility are typically the major contributing factors.

This condition is being seen more frequently due to the increased use of mobile phones, tablets and laptops which are associated with poor posture.



**Thoracic pain**



**Numbness or tingling in  
arms, hands or fingers**



**Cotton wool headaches  
in base of neck**



**Limited range of motion**



**Sleep disturbances**





## Stiffness, pain and reduced mobility

Typically sustained postures or repetitive movements create an increased load to the joints and nerves in the T4 region. This leads to pain, stiffness and reduced mobility. Sitting in one position for extended periods is typically difficult, such as driving, sitting at a computer or relaxing on the couch. As this irritation increases repetitive movements such as lifting, twisting and bending become difficult to perform and limits the patient's ability to perform their daily activities, such as carrying groceries, loading the car or general housework.

## Physiotherapy Intervention

Depending on the severity of their condition, sufferers may experience significant disruptions to their daily life. If patients are referred to physiotherapy, our expert team of physios at Benchmark Physiotherapy and Sports Injury Centre can treat this condition very effectively ensuring that your patient gets back to living life pain-free. The prognosis of a full recovery is excellent and importantly, if treatment begins as early as possible patients can avoid any complex and drawn-out complications.

## Treatment Protocol

At Benchmark Physiotherapy and Sports Injury Centre we adopt a two-fold approach to managing T4 Syndrome.

### Phase One

1. Our team will conduct a thorough review of the patient's symptoms and daily activities.
2. We will advise on appropriate activity modification to ensure that the body has time to rest and begin the healing process.
3. The information gathered will then allow us to create a customised treatment plan that includes a combination of joint mobilisations, soft tissue releases, and neural mobilisation techniques to help our patients find immediate relief from pain.

### Phase Two

1. Once initial symptoms have been addressed, our physiotherapists will develop a home exercise program that will assist in patient recovery. This customised program contains localised thoracic exercises targeted at improving movement dysfunction to support the hands-on work done by our physiotherapists in session.



## Summary

At Benchmark Physiotherapy and Sports Injury Centre, our treatment philosophy is to "Remove, Restore and Redefine." T4 Syndrome can have a significant impact on a person's ability to function and enjoy daily activities.

Working with our team of expert practitioners in the management of symptoms, your patients will be effectively treated ensuring they return to living a full life without pain. Contact us at **1300 381 207** to find out how we can help your patients reach their potential.

Contact us to find out more about how we can help your patients reach their potential.

Call **1300 381 207**

## References

1. Karas, Steve et al. T4 Syndrome: A Scoping Review of the Literature. *Journal of Manipulative & Physiological Therapeutics*, Volume 40, Issue 2, 118 – 125. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmpt.2016.11.002>

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