Can Cracking Your Neck Cause a Stroke?

When a man from Oklahoma tried to stretch his sore neck, he heard a pop, and then the left side of his body went numb.

May 9, 2019 By Alicia Green

A lot of people crack their joints to relieve pressure or stress, but the practice can lead to severe injuries. In March, in an attempt to stretch his sore neck, 28-year-old Josh Hader of Guthrie, Oklahoma, accidentally damaged arteries in the area, which caused him to experience a stroke that resulted in the left side of his body going completely numb, CNN reports.

Hader said he was walking at almost a 45-degree angle to the left as a result of the medical event.

“When he popped his neck, he tore arteries that go to the bone of the neck, where the neck joins the skull at the base of the brain,” explained Vance McCollom, MD, the doctor who treated Hader at Mercy Hospital in Oklahoma. “The way he twisted the neck caused a bisection.”

When Hader arrived at the medical center, doctors gave him tissue plasminogen activator, or tPA, a medication used to help dissolve blood clots. He spent four days in intensive care and underwent inpatient therapy.

In addition to the numbness, Hader also suffered from weakness and double vision. Doctors required him to wear an eye patch for several weeks because of debility in one of the muscles leading to the eye.

Since completing rehab, Hader is able to amble about without a walker or cane, but he tires much more quickly, finds it difficult to walk long distances and has shaky balance. “My left side tingles a little and feels heavier than it used to,” he adds. “I also don’t have as much control of that side as I used to. My right side doesn’t feel sharp pain or hot and cold.”

One of the worst side effects of Hader’s stroke was hiccups lasting two weeks straight that made it almost impossible for him to breathe.

McCollum attributed Hader’s hiccups to the fact that it occurred at the base of the brain and said he has seen other individuals who have experienced the same kind of stroke.

To learn more about stroke, click here.

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