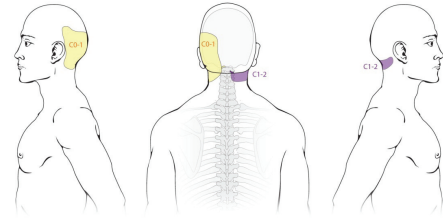


Upper Cervical Joint Pain Pattern



- The upper cervical joints are the top two joints of the neck. They are called the atlanto-occipital (C0-1) joint and atlanto-axial (C1-2) joint.
- These joints can cause upper cervical pain and ~~even~~ headaches. These headaches are called cervicogenic headaches. They can feel as severe as migraines but do not have an associated aura.
- Dreyfus et al.¹ established pain patterns of the cervical facet joints.
 - Parasagittal cervical and cervicothoracic pain.
 - The atlanto-occipital (C0-1) joint is generally more diffuse in the sub-occipital region.
 - The atlanto-axial (C1-2) joint is typically a smaller pain pattern behind the ear.
 - Do not/rarely cause midline cervical pain or arm pain.
 - Do not cross to the other side. Left joints do not cause right sided pain and vice versa.
 - Can be unilateral pain (from joints on one side of the spine) or bilateral (pain from both joints on both sides of the spine.)
- When pain is chronic or severe, the pain can extend beyond these pain patterns.
- Joints do not have to show degeneration on diagnostic imaging to be painful. This is usually due to a joint capsule sprain (synovitis).
- Facet joints that do show degeneration on diagnostic imaging can be either a joint capsule sprain (synovitis) or degeneration (arthrosis) or both.
- Consider that the patient may have more than one pain generator.

1. Dreyfuss P, Michaelsen M, Fletcher D. Atlanto-occipital and lateral atlanto-axial joint pain patterns. *Spine*. 1994;19:1125-1131.

2. Sizer PS, Phelps V, Azevedo E, Hay A, Vaught M. Diagnosis and Management of Cervicogenic Headache. *Pain Practice*, Volume Pain Practice. 2005;5(3): 255–274.

