

## PHASES OF HEALING

### TREATMENT PLAN/ APPOINTMENTS:

Treatment plans vary per patient and per spinal injury as each patient and injury is different. Initially, patients are treated more frequently as our goal is to increase healing and decrease pain. Treatment for whiplash takes time and patience as the soft tissue and joint complex heal. Reduction in pain alone does not mean that the patient has fully healed, reevaluation and examination by the physician is important in ensuring proper healing. It is very important to continue with care through all stages of healing in order to ensure proper and full recovery. Stages of treatment and healing include the following 3 phases:

- **Acute Phase:** This is the initial phase following the injury. During this phase symptoms may include severe pain, inflammation, swelling, decreased range motion and possibly a decrease in neurological function. During the end of this phase scar tissue begins to grow. This phase can last anywhere from 2-6 weeks.
- **Stabilization Phase:** This stage is marked by new growth of connective tissue and capillaries, to help repair damaged structures. Scar tissue continues to grow during this time. Tissues in this stage are very fragile, so placing stress on the injured area should be limited to the treating physician. Gentle movement and mild isometric and low intensity, non weight bearing exercises may be advised. This phase can last anywhere from 4-6 weeks.
- **Rehabilitation Phase:** During this phase of healing, scar tissue is remodeled by the stresses placed on it. This means that the activities and exercises will affect the strength and fiber orientation of the developing scar tissue. During this stage, continued care and home exercise programs are crucial for proper healing. Such care will help to properly develop the scar tissue to where it can be useful in protecting and stabilizing the injured area. If treatment or home exercises are discontinued at this phase, the injured area will heal in a contracted and disorganized state and the patient will become more susceptible to re-injury in the future. This phase can last anywhere from 4-6 weeks.

*Each phase of treatment and healing can vary in time depending upon severity of injury, types of treatment, patient compliance and symptom flare-ups.*