



## Checklist for Clinical Examination of Cervical and Upper Thoracic Spine

### **History**

- ☐ Mechanism of injury
- ☐ Unusual sensations at time of injury
- ☐ Previous injury
- ☐ Type and location of pain
- ☐ Numbness and tingling
- ☐ Chief complaint

If chronic, ascertain:

- ☐ Aggravating and easing factors
- ☐ Onset and duration of symptoms
- ☐ Effects of time of day or activity on symptoms
- ☐ Night pain
- ☐ Sleeping position

### **Observation**

- ☐ Posture (head and upper body)
- ☐ Restriction, guarding, or hesitation in movement
- ☐ Facial expressions
- ☐ Visible swelling, discoloration, spasm, asymmetry

### **Differential Diagnosis**

Refer to palpation procedures and special tests listed here to rule out the following:

- ☐ Nerve root lesions
- ☐ Disc injury
- ☐ Brachial plexus lesions
- ☐ Peripheral nerve injury
- ☐ Upper-extremity joint or muscle injury
- ☐ Myofascial irritations

### **Range of Motion**

- ☐ Active ROM: cervical flexion, extension, lateral flexion, and rotation
- ☐ Passive ROM: end-range cervical flexion, extension, lateral flexion, and rotation
- ☐ Shoulder motion as appropriate

### **Strength**

- ☐ Manual resistance to cervical flexion (supine), extension (prone), lateral flexion (seated or side-lying), and rotation (seated)

### **Neurological Tests**

- ☐ Dermatome (C5-T1)
- ☐ Myotome (C5-T1)
- ☐ Reflex (biceps, brachioradialis, triceps)

### **Special Tests**

- ☐ Valsalva maneuver
- ☐ Cervical compression test
- ☐ Shoulder depression test
- ☐ Nerve root compression relief test
- ☐ Cervical distraction relief test
- ☐ Tinel's sign
- ☐ Upper-limb tension tests
- ☐ Vertebral artery test
- ☐ TOS tests (Adson's, Allen, military brace position)

### **Palpation**

- ☐ Soft tissue mobility
- ☐ Cervical and upper thoracic spinous processes
- ☐ Transverse processes
- ☐ Posterior, lateral, and anterior cervical and upper back muscles

### **Functional Tests**

Check for normal unrestricted movement with:

- ☐ Sport-specific or work-specific activity
- ☐ Overhead and upper-extremity movements
- ☐ Trunk movements
- ☐ Tasks that require full ROM of cervical spine