

Neck pain

Information and advice

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This information is designed to supplement the advice given by your doctor, and is written by physiotherapists based on the latest medical advice.

Following the onset of acute neck pain, we recommend you follow this advice:

- Taking painkillers regularly is very important at this early stage. If your usual painkillers are not enough, your doctor can advise you.
- Apply an ice pack, or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel on the back of the neck for a maximum of 20 minutes. You can repeat this several times a day. If using within 72 hours post injury, apply for a maximum of 10 minutes only. Do not use if your sensation is impaired.
- You may find heat helpful. You could use a wheat pack or a hot water bottle (make sure it has a cover). Do not use if your sensation is impaired.
- When sleeping, use one or two pillows, whichever is more comfortable, and holds your head in a neutral position. The top pillow should be soft to support your neck. Lie on your back or your side.

Exercise

The following exercises can be done three to four times a day. Gradually increase the number of repetitions and try to regain your full range of movement as soon as you can. It may be more comfortable to do some of the exercises lying down for the first few days.

Sitting on a hard-backed chair:

1. Turn head slowly to look over left shoulder and then turn to look over right shoulder.



Repeat five times

2. Tilt head towards shoulder slowly. Return to the middle and repeat to the other side.

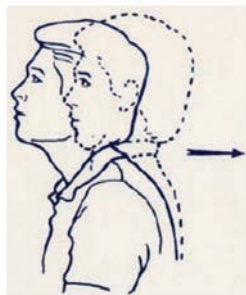


Repeat five times

3. Sitting with back supported, gently tuck chin to chest as if making a 'double chin'.

Hold for the count of three seconds

Repeat five times



4. Shrug shoulders up, back and around, then relax.

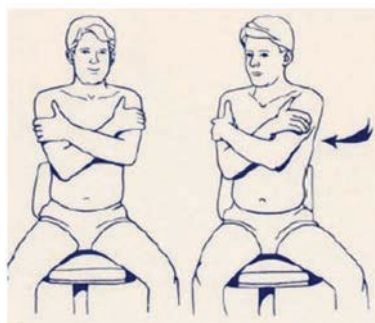
Repeat five times



5. Sitting in a chair with your arms across your chest, turn your trunk to the right and hold for five seconds.

Then turn to the left.

Repeat five times each side



6. Stretch both hands overhead as high as possible.

Repeat five times



If you feel the exercises are making your pain worse, reduce the number or frequency of the exercises or stop and seek advice.



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