

Neck Pain

Neck pain is very common. It is commonly due to minor strains or bad posture. The usual advice is to keep the neck moving.

There are different types and causes of neck pain;

- **Mechanical neck pain.** Sometimes called simple neck pain. This is usually caused by minor strains or trauma, or due to bad posture.
- **Whiplash injuries.** Usually caused by road traffic accident. The neck is caused to move in a sudden way forwards and backwards and sometimes side to side causing strain of the muscles, ligaments and joints.
- **Degeneration.** As we get older we get wear and tear in our joints and discs in the neck. This is commonly called Cervical Spondylosis.
- **“Trapped Nerve” or Cervical Radiculopathy.** The nerves that run down the arms originate from the spinal cord in the neck. Occasionally the nerves may become trapped or compressed. This can send pain, pins and needles, and/or numbness down the arm. If you have any of these symptoms you should see your doctor.

How can I help myself?

- Keep active and try to stay at work if possible.
- Take simple pain relief, (your GP or pharmacist will advise you about medication).
- Hot packs may provide temporary relief.
- Gradually increase your physical activity.

- **Good posture:**

It is important that you are aware of your posture at all times, particularly when sitting or using a computer. Sitting or standing with poor posture puts strain on the neck joints and surrounding structures such as ligaments. Remember to maintain the curve at the bottom of your spine (lordosis), and try not to let your chin poke forwards. If it helps, when sitting, place a rolled towel between your low back and the chair to help maintain the lordosis

Bad Posture:



Good Posture:



Neck exercises:

It is important that you keep your neck mobile. The following are some simple exercises that will help with this.

Please be aware that you **must stop** the exercises if you experience any:

- Dizziness.
- Changes in your vision.
- Any pins and needles or numbness in the arms or face.

1.



Whilst sitting down, turn your head to look over your shoulder until you feel a stretch. Repeat to the other side.

Repeat 5 times each side.

2.



Whilst sitting down, tilt your head towards your shoulder until you feel a stretch. Repeat to the other side.

Repeat 5 times.

3.



Whilst sitting down with your neck and back straight, pull your chin in. Keep your head level, do not look up or down.

Repeat 5 times.

4.



Whilst sitting down, bend your head forwards until you feel a stretch behind the neck.

Repeat 5 times.

When to consult your GP:

- If your pain gets progressively worse rather than better over several weeks.
- If the function of the arm becomes affected eg. clumsiness or persistent numbness in the arm.
- You feel unwell with neck pain, symptoms such as a fever or weight loss and/ or headache.
- If you are unable to sleep due to your neck pain.

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