

Neck Pain (Cervical Strain)

COMMON CAUSES:

Neck pain may be triggered by a specific event, such as a injury or motor vehicle accident (whiplash). More common and less dramatic causes include reaching or pulling movements and awkward resting or sleeping positions. Poor sitting postures over time can lead to neck discomfort.

Chronic neck pain is often triggered by prior injuries, especially if original injury was severe or injury was not given enough time to heal.

INFORMATION ABOUT NECK PAIN:

- ☑ When neck pain develops, stop all strenuous activities involving neck and back to prevent aggravation of injury (increasing the damage) and healing delays.
- ☑ Most neck pain is related to muscle or tendon strain rather than injury to the spine. Your neck may feel stiff and sore. Muscle spasms may develop as strained muscle swells after injury. Rest and gentle stretching will help the muscles relax.
- ☑ Headaches can be associated with neck pain,. If severe seek medical attention.
- ☑ Most injuries will not require x-ray or other imaging studies. Depending upon severity of injury, your healthcare provider may recommend further tests.

SEE YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IF:

- ☹ Neck pain was caused by trauma to the head or neck or if headache is severe
- ☹ Weakness, numbness or tingling in arms or hands that doesn't resolve
- ☹ Pain prevents normal activities (dressing, walking and eating) for longer than a few days.

QUICK REVIEW: NECK PAIN

- ◆ If you suspect injury, stop activity immediately. Apply ICE. Wrap sealed ice bag in towel and apply to injury as soon as possible. Keep on injury for 15 -20 minutes and repeat every 2-3 hours for the first 48 to 72 hours. This will help reduce swelling and pain. Early care can accelerate your healing.
- ◆ After the first 72 hours warm, moist heat can be applied through shower or soaked towels. Place on neck for 20 minutes every 3-4 hours.
- ◆ Tylenol®, Aleve®, or ibuprofen may be taken. Follow package directions and take with food.
- ◆ Research suggests most people can and should return to normal daily activities gradually as tolerated.

In most cases neck pain progressively improves over days or weeks without further intervention. During recovery, exercise with caution to prevent re-injury. Appropriate gradual rehabilitation will reduce healing time and help prevent re-injury.

- ◆ **RECOVERY TAKES TIME.**
- ◆ Rehabilitation may take a few weeks for mild injury and a severe injury could take 6 weeks or more depending on severity of injury. The severity of the injury will dictate recovery time. Slow rehabilitation will reduce healing time and prevent re-injury.
- ◆ Once initial pain has eased a rehabilitation program of neck strengthening exercises as well as stretching exercises to increase flexibility is recommended to help prevent re-injury and pain.

Neck Pain (Cervical Strain) Rehabilitation Exercises

- ◆ Rehabilitation exercises are critical for recovery process. Mild soreness during exercises is acceptable but not PAIN.
- ◆ HELPFUL HINT: Take deep even breaths while completing stretches and concentrate on the exercises with slow steady movements. If you experience any discomfort other than muscle soreness, slow down the pace or decrease the number of repetitions. If pain persists, discontinue exercise and contact your healthcare provider.

[Only do exercises if you do not have pain or numbness in arms or hands]

EXERCISE 1: Stand up straight in shower and allow very warm water to hit back of neck. (see pictures to right)

EXERCISE 2: Gently push your chin or head straight back. We call this the chin tuck. Look straight ahead. Hold 5 seconds

EXERCISE 3: Slowly touch your chin to your chest and then raise head back to see ceiling. Relax muscles and repeat.

EXERCISE 4: Slowly tilt head and try to touch left ear to left shoulder. Next, slowly tilt head and try to touch right ear to right shoulder. Relax and repeat.

EXERCISE 5: Slowly turn head to right and then to the left. Try to turn neck as far as possible to stretch, but not cause pain. Relax muscles and repeat.

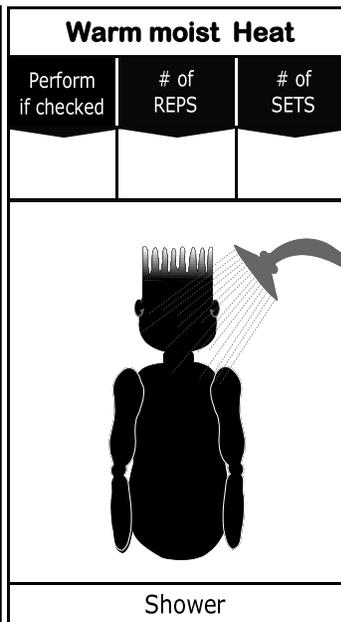
EXERCISE 6: Lift shoulders upwards and count to five while holding shoulders close to ears. Relax muscles and repeat.

EXERCISE 7: Roll shoulders forward in circular movement. Relax and then roll shoulders backwards (reversing the movement). Repeat

EXERCISE 8: Keep arms at your sides, squeeze shoulder blades together, than relax.

TIPS FOR HEALTHY NECK :

- ☑ Generally, neck should remain straight with chin pulled back in relaxed position
- ☑ Keep good posture while sitting at desk, reading, watching TV or driving
- ☑ Avoid sleeping on stomach. Sleep on back or your side, using pillow under head and between legs to keep spine in natural position.
- ☑ If sleeping on back, use pillow to support curve of neck, do not lift head.



Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
Exercises 1-8	10-12	1-3
