

Advice for Managing Neck Pain

Key Points



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Why do I have Neck Pain?

Neck pain is very common. Most people get it at some time. It often gets better in a few weeks. Some people may have pain that comes and goes.

Your spine (backbone) is very strong. Changes in your neck happen as you get older, this is normal (like wrinkles or grey hair).

How to Manage Neck Pain

Everyday Tips

- Keep moving, don't stay still for too long.
- Do an activity you enjoy, like walking or swimming.
- Sit and stand comfortably, change position often.
- Move around every 20–30 minutes.
- Lift safely (bend your knees, not your back).
- Keep a healthy weight.
- Find ways to relax and manage stress.
- Make sure your desk or workstation fits you well.

If Your Pain Gets Worse (Flare-Up)

A flare-up means your pain suddenly feels worse. What to do:

- Keep moving your neck gently.
- Avoid carrying heavy bags on one side.
- Use a backpack or a bag on wheels if you can.
- Try a comfortable sleeping position.

Service provided by

- Do gentle stretches often.
- Stay at work or keep doing usual activities if you can.
- You can use pain relief suggested by a pharmacist or doctor.
- Try a warm or cold pack, use what feels best.

Posture (How to Sit and Stand)

There is no perfect posture for everyone. The important thing is to keep changing position.

Helpful Tips

- Break up tasks, don't do the same thing for hours.
- Take short walk (even just to get a drink).
- Stretch your neck regularly.
- Avoid awkward positions (like twisting).
- Don't hold your phone between your shoulder and ear, use a headset if you are on the phone a lot.
- Set up your desk so it feels comfortable.
- Use the stairs when you can.
- If driving, take breaks every 2 hours.

Simple Neck Exercises

You don't need to do all the exercises. Choose the ones that help and do them gently and often.

When doing exercises:

- Don't stretch too far so it is not comfortable.
- Heat (like a warm pack) can help before exercise.
- It is normal to feel a bit of an ache after, this should settle.

Hold each stretch for 20-30 seconds



Look down and gentle tuck your chin in.



Tilt your head to the side, moving your ear towards your shoulder. Repeat on both sides.



Turn your head to look over one shoulder. Repeat on both sides.



Pull your chin straight back (don't tilt up or down)

Strength Exercises



Lie on your back. Press the back of your head down whilst pulling your chin in. Hold 5-7seconds.



Lie on your front. Tuck your chin in and lift your forehead and nose 1cm up. Hold 3 secs.

When to Get Help

You should speak to a healthcare professional if:

- Your pain is not getting better.
- It stops you doing everyday tasks.
- It is very strong or getting worse.
- You feel worried or unable to cope.

Urgent Symptoms (Get Help Quickly):

These are rare, but important. Contact a doctor urgently if you have.

- Trouble speaking or swallowing.
- Blurred or double vision.
- Tingling, numbness or weakness in your arms.
- Fainting (passing out).
- New dizziness.
- Being sick (vomiting) with neck pain.

More Information:

You can find more information about managing neck pain on the following pages:

- [WebPage Link for the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy](#)
- National Institute for Health & Care Excellence: [WebPage link for the NICE Low Back Pain Guidance](#)
- [WebPage Link for Arthritis Research UK](#)

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