

## For pain in your neck

### Advice

Neck pain is common but most cases aren't caused by a serious problem. Sometimes pain persists beyond the expected healing times, this is not normally as a result of serious disease or damage. The way your body processes and responds to pain can change if your symptoms have been going on for more than 3 months. It is extremely important to aim to regain or maintain normal movement of the joints in the neck over time to assist in your recovery.

### What can I do to help?

**Pain relief:** Simple painkillers such as paracetamol (analgesics) and ibuprofen (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) can help. You should use them as advised, as and when you need them. Don't wait until your pain is severe before taking painkillers, as they're likely to work better if you manage your pain carefully. Don't use painkillers for more than 2 weeks without seeking medical advice. If you are currently taking any form of medication it is advisable to consult your GP or pharmacist before taking additional pain relief.

**Posture:** Try to maintain good posture when sitting at home, at work or in the car. Staying in awkward positions while working or driving will affect the soft tissues in your neck and could increase your pain and delay your recovery.

**Heat:** Using a heat pack or hot water bottle against the area of pain in your neck can help settle symptoms. Apply for up to 20 mins. Wrap in a tea-towel to prevent burns.

**Massage:** Gentle massage to the neck muscles often helps to alleviate pain. Applying a heat pack to the back of the neck can also be very effective for reducing pain and stiffness.

### Exercises to try:

Please try each one 2-10 times each hour. Some discomfort is normal as you may be moving muscles which are tight or stiff. Please stop them if they aggravate your pain.

### 1. Flexion and Extension



In sitting, drop your head down so you are looking at your toes. Hold for 2 seconds, and then raise your head so you are now looking up towards the ceiling. Hold for 2 seconds then relax. Repeat as able.

### 2. Retractions



In sitting, tuck your chin backwards as shown in the picture, ensuring your nose is kept level. Hold for a few seconds, before returning to the starting position. Repeat as able.

### 3. Rotations



In sitting, turn your head to look over your right shoulder, and hold for two seconds before repeating to the left. You can use your hand to gently apply a pressure to increase the stretch. Repeat throughout the day.

### 4. Side Flexion



In sitting, tilt your head to the side so that your ear moves towards your shoulder. Hold for a couple of seconds. Slowly return to an upright position before tilting your head to the other side. You can use your hand to help apply a pressure to increase the stretch.

