



Queen Victoria Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Acute Neck Pain Management



Why have I suddenly got a pain in the neck?

The most likely cause is a simple soft tissue strain. This could be following an injury or from overuse.

The pain that you are feeling comes from these soft tissues which are very sensitive to pain. The muscles may go into spasm as protective reaction to the strain. Inflammation and pain is the result of this.



©iStockphoto.com

How can I control the pain that I am feeling?

1. Heat or ice applied to the painful area can help reduce the inflammation, pain and spasm in the muscles and ligaments. There are lots of different things on the market, e.g. wheat bags, gel packs and instant air activating heat pads. An ordinary hot water bottle can be just as effective though.

Make sure that you follow the manufacturer's advice when applying so as to avoid burning yourself. If using a hot water bottle, make sure that you have a thick towel between the bottle and your skin and check regularly to avoid a burn. Only use heat or ice if you have normal sensation in the area that you are applying it to.

2. Pain killers (such as paracetamol) are very effective in the early days and we would advise you take them regularly. Anti-inflammatories (such as ibuprofen) can be good at reducing any inflammation present as well as controlling the pain. Only take them on the advice of your local pharmacist or GP.
3. The most important thing of all is gentle exercise. It is vital that you keep your neck moving within pain (this means don't push movement into pain). If you let the muscles stiffen up they will stay in a state of spasm and will lead to chronic or long term problems.

Neck pain usually settles once the pain or spasm decreases with no lasting problems.

What exercises should I be doing?

Following are a number of suggested exercises. They should be worked through at least once a day. Although there may be some discomfort during the exercises, they should not cause a lasting increase in overall pain.

If you have any queries regarding this information or the exercises mentioned, please contact Physiotherapy department on:

01342 414004.



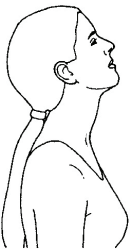
©PhysioTools Ltd.

Sitting.

Bend your head forwards until you feel a stretch behind your neck.

Hold approx. 5 secs.

Repeat 10 times



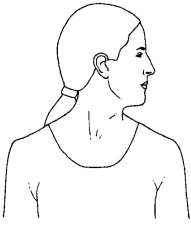
©PhysioTools Ltd.

Sitting.

Bend your head backwards as far as it is possible.

Hold approx. 5 secs.

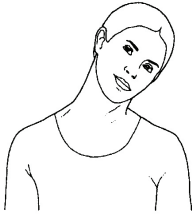
Repeat 10 times



©PhysioTools Ltd.

Sitting.

Turn your head to one side until you feel a stretch.
Hold approx. 5 secs. Repeat to other side.
Repeat 10 times



©PhysioTools Ltd.

Sitting.

Tilt your head toward one shoulder until you feel the stretch on the opposite side.
Hold approx. 5 secs. Repeat to other side.
Repeat 10 times



©PhysioTools Ltd.
Built on PhysioTools®

Try to tuck your chin in without looking up or down (to create a double chin effect) Hold for 5 seconds and repeat.

Repeat 5-10 times

**Please ask if you
would like this leaflet
in larger print or an
alternative format.**

Physiotherapy

Issue 3 – Ref. No. 0416

Approved by the Patient Information Group

Print August 2020 – Review August 2023

© Copyright QVH NHS Foundation Trust

www.qvh.nhs.uk