

**Patient Information:**

## Neck Pain (Cervical Strain)

- Common Causes
- Treating Neck Pain
- Quick Treatment: Neck Pain
- See Your Healthcare Provider If
- Rehabilitation Exercises
- Rights and Wrongs for a Healthy Neck

### COMMON CAUSES:

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

Long term neck problems are more likely when pain develops gradually or discomfort is recurrent over a period of time. Chronic neck pain is often triggered by prior injuries, especially if original injury was severe or injury was not given enough time to heal.

A frequent complaint is that neck pain has developed for no apparent reason. The events preceding pain or discomfort will provide clues behind original cause even if the exact incident is not evident.

### TREATING NECK PAIN:

Most cases of neck pain are not serious and respond to simple treatments.

- ☑ When pain develops suddenly or related to direct trauma, stop all strenuous activities 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 spine. Your neck may feel stiff and sore to touch. Muscle spasms may develop as strained muscle swells after injury. Rest and gentle stretching will help the muscles relax.
- ☑ Do not worry about headache development, unless direct trauma to head occurred or headache is severe. This side effect will resolve in time.
- ☑ Most injuries will not require X-Ray or other imaging studies. Depending upon severity of injury your healthcare provider will recommend further tests.

### QUICK TREATMENT : 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 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®, Alleve®, or Ibuprofen may be taken. Follow package directions and take with food.
- ◆ AVIOD anything that significantly increases neck pain.
- ◆ Research suggests most people can and should return to normal daily activities as tolerable. AVOID anything that significantly increases neck pain.

In most cases neck pain progressively improves over 2-3 days without further intervention, but pain and soreness can persist for weeks depending on injury and your choice of daily activities. During recovery, exercise with caution to prevent re-injury. Appropriate, slow, gradual rehabilitation will reduce healing time and help prevent re-injury.

### SEE YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IF:

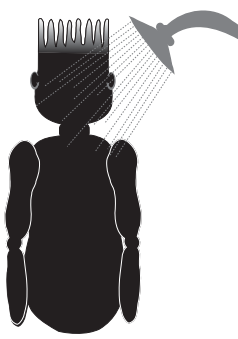
- ⚠ Neck pain or headache development was caused by direct trauma to the head or if headache is severe
- ⚠ Weakness or sensation loss in arms that doesn't resolve
- ⚠ Pain prevents normal activities for longer than a few days

# Neck Pain (Cervical Strain) Rehabilitation Exercises

## REHABILITATION EXERCISES

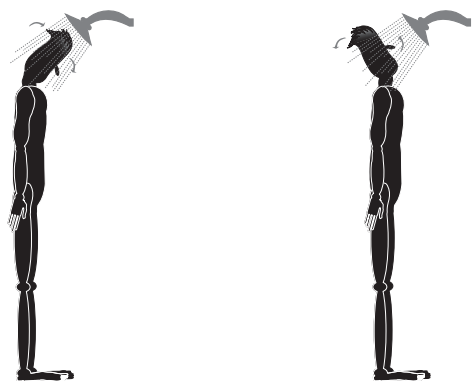
- ◆ **RECOVERY TAKES TIME.**
- ◆ Rehabilitation may take weeks or even months depending on severity of injury. The severity of the injury will dictate recovery time. Slow, gradual rehabilitation will reduce healing time and prevent re-injury.
- ◆ Once initial pain has eased a rehabilitation program of neck strengthening exercises as well as stretching exercises to increase flexibility is recommended to help prevent re-injury and pain.
- ◆ Rehabilitation exercises are critical for recovery process. Do these exercises on a regular basis and you will see improvements in your posture, work endurance, and athletic performance. The exercises shouldn't irritate your back or neck when done properly. If there is pain, STOP.
- ◆ **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.
- ◆ **REPEAT THESE EXERCISES TWICE PER DAY. AS NECK IMPROVES YOU CAN COMPLETE EXERCISES MORE OFTEN THROUGHOUT THE DAY.**
- ◆ **Hot shower or heat may only be needed during the first 3-4 days of rehabilitation exercises.**

Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS



**EXERCISE:** Stand up straight in shower and allow very warm water to hit back of neck.

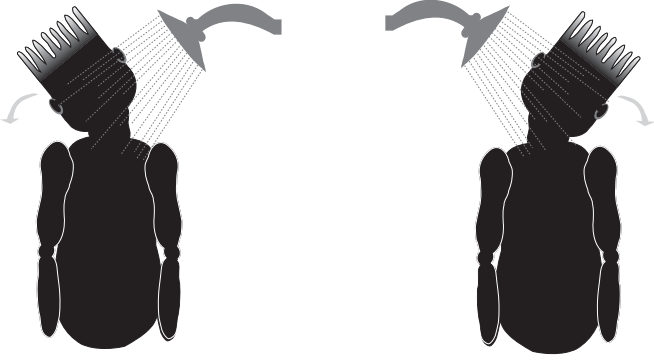
Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
	10-15	1-3



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

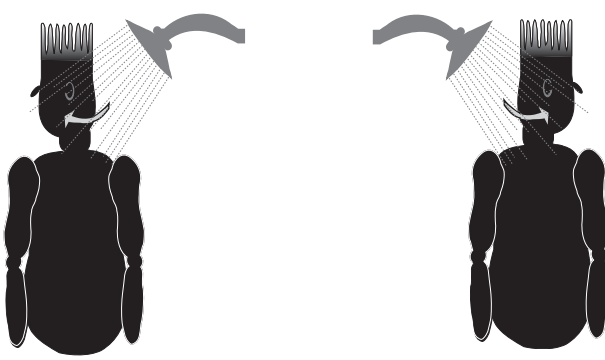
# Neck Pain (Cervical Strain) Rehabilitation Exercises

Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
	10-15	1-3



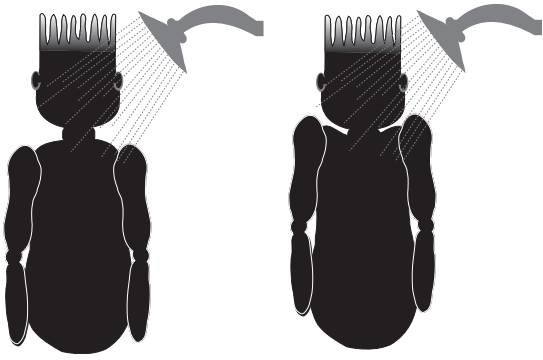
**EXERCISE:** Slowly tilt head and try to touch left ear to left shoulder. Next, slowly tilt head and try to touch right ear to right shoulder. Relax and repeat.

Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
	10-15	1-3




**EXERCISE:** 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.

Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
	10-15	1-3



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

Perform if checked	# of REPS	# of SETS
	10-15	1-3



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

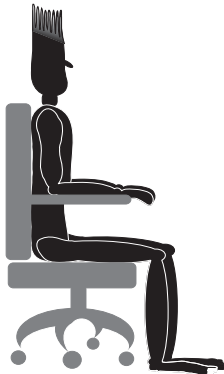
# Neck Pain (Cervical Strain) Pain Prevention

## THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS FOR A 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 side, using pillow to keep spine straight
- ☑ If sleeping on back use pillow to support curve of neck, do not lift head.

### RIGHT



Keep neck pulled back and back straight with knees uncrossed.

### WRONG



Slouching with neck bent and knees crossed.

### RIGHT



Keep neck pulled back and back straight

### WRONG



Seat reclined and positioned too far back causing leg, arm, and back misalignment.

# Neck Pain (Cervical Strain) Pain Prevention (continued)

## THE RIGHT AND WRONG FOR A HEALTHY NECK (CONTINUED)

### RIGHT



Use stable chair or stool to reach shelves

### WRONG



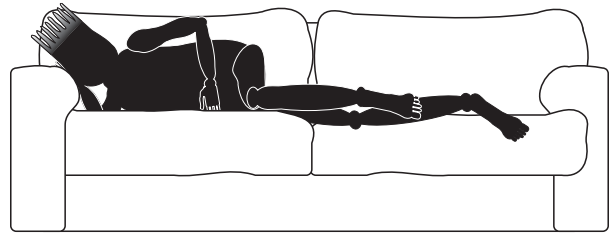
Don't reach for things over your head

### RIGHT



Best way to watch TV is to sit up properly.

### WRONG

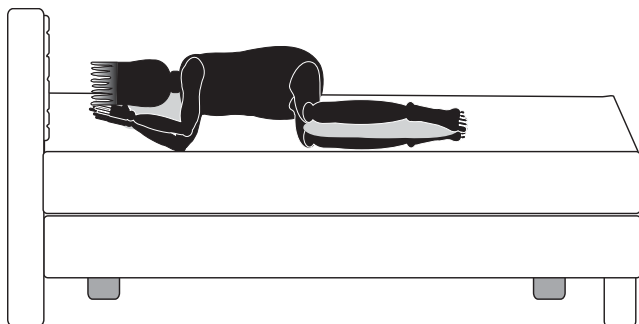


Don't prop your head up while lying on sofa.

# Neck Pain (Cervical Strain) Pain Prevention (continued)

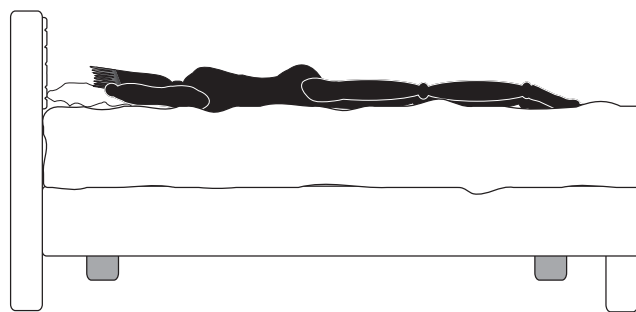
## THE RIGHT AND WRONG FOR A HEALTHY NECK (CONTINUED)

### RIGHT



Sleep on side, using pillow under head to keep all areas of spine straight. Adding a pillow between knees can also help.

### WRONG



Laying on stomach causing misalignment of multiple areas of the spine.