Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Mechanical Neck Pain v2

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Mechanical Neck Pain

Patient Information

Musculoskeletal (MSK) Physiotherapy Outpatients

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Disclaimer

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone, and while every precaution was taken in selecting these exercises, they do not come without risks. If you have any concerns regarding injury, or whether you should partake in the exercises, then you should consult your General Practitioner (GP) or Physiotherapist prior to commencing any exercises shown here.

It is quite normal to feel some discomfort following exercise, but it is important that this discomfort eases within 2 hours of finishing the exercise and does not have an overall negative effect on your symptoms.

The exercise plans shown here are designed to be used as a guide and a point of reference; they are not exhaustive and can be modified and progressed under the supervision of your physiotherapist.

Introduction

The neck is made up of seven bones called vertebrae. Nerves emerge between the vertebrae and travel down your arms. Signals are sent down these nerves to stimulate movement and up through the nerves which allow us to experience touch and pain. The neck is supported by an array of muscles and ligaments which help to stabilise the neck and support the head. These muscles enable movement so you can move your head and neck.

Aims

The aim of this leaflet is to provide information and guidance regarding your neck pain and reassure you that you will cause no damage to your neck or spine by engaging in physical activity and your daily routine.

Causes

Unfortunately neck pain can begin with or without any reason. It may arise after an accident or for no obvious reason at all.

Mechanical or non-specific neck pain describes pain that lacks a clear physical or anatomical cause. Although pre-existing conditions such as osteoarthritis may be visible on investigative imaging such as x-rays, it may be that this is not the cause of your neck pain.

Mechanical neck pain is the most common form of neck pain and can be caused by one or more factors including:

- Daily activities
- Poor posture
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Work activities
- Excessive tension on muscles in neck and upper back

Symptoms

Common symptoms of mechanical neck pain are:

- Pain
- Stiffness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Low mood

Treatment

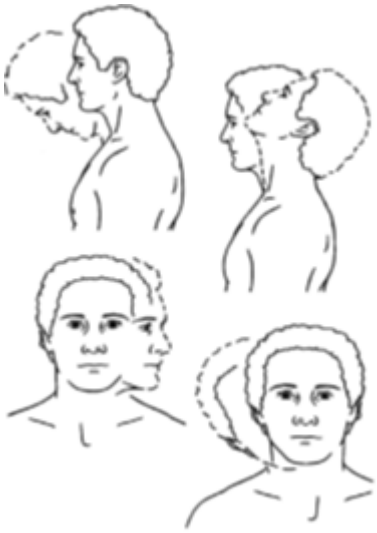
Your physiotherapist will assess your neck and upper limb to ensure that there are no serious issues occurring alongside your current neck pain. Following this, they will provide you with an individualised stretching and strengthening program which has been shown to decrease neck pain and improve your daily function so you can return to work and participate in the things that you enjoy. It is important to get your neck moving as soon as possible to prevent further stiffness and reduced range of movement. This may seem painful and daunting at first, but slow and controlled movements will help to reduce your pain and stiffness. Other treatments you could use are:

- Heat – hot water bottle or heat pack
- Ice – wrap ice in damp towel before applying for around 10 minutes
- Pain relief such as paracetamol – speak to your GP regarding appropriate pain relief for you
- Self-massage

Neck Exercises

Neck Mobility

- Pull your head straight back keeping your jaw and eyes level.
- Hold for 10 seconds and repeat 10 times. Perform at regular intervals throughout the day.



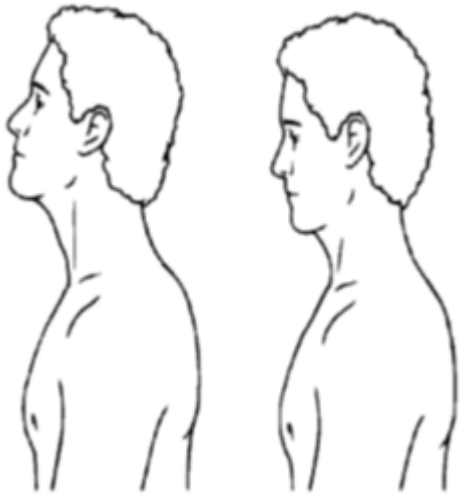
Neck Stretches

- Bring your chin to your chest and place one hand on the back of your head. Pull your head forward until you feel a stretch in your neck.
- Hold for 1 minute.
- Tilt your head to the right bringing your right ear to your right shoulder. Reach over to the top of your head and pull your head down a little further until you feel a stretch.
- Hold for 1 minute. Repeat on left side.
- **Stretches are to be performed throughout the day.**



Stability and Strengthening Exercises

1. Pull your head straight back keeping your jaw and eyes level. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat 10 times. Perform at regular intervals throughout the day.



2. Pull your shoulder blades down and together contracting your back muscles. Hold your shoulder blades together for 10 seconds and slowly release. Perform at regular intervals throughout the day.



3. Bring your hand to your forehead. Attempt to look down whilst resisting the movement with your hand. Hold for 3-5 seconds and repeat 10 times.



4. Bring your hand to the back of your head. Attempt to look up whilst resisting the movement with your hand. Hold for 3-5 seconds and repeat 10 times.





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