

**ADVICE FOR PATIENTS WITH
NECK PAIN**

Patient Information Leaflet

Physiotherapy Department
(Information sheet code SHOT/SHOA)

A SMOKING FREE ENVIRONMENT

Dear Patient

This advice and exercise sheet has been produced by Senior Physiotherapists working within Worcestershire Acute Hospital NHS Trust.

It offers simple advice and exercises to help you safely manage your neck problem, often the right advice and exercises are all that is needed.

This leaflet has been made available to your GP who may ask you to try the advice and exercises prior to referring for Physiotherapy. Alternatively, you may be sent this leaflet whilst you are on a Physiotherapy waiting list.

This leaflet is also available as a download from the Trust's website www.worcsacute.nhs.uk/patient-services-a-to-z/physiotherapy.aspx

Follow the advice and exercises with care. If any of the exercises make your pain worse STOP and seek advice. IF YOU FEEL THAT YOUR CONDITION IS DETERIORATING OR NOT IMPROVING, YOU SHOULD SEEK FURTHER MEDICAL ADVICE.

ADVICE

Neck pain can occur at any time but it is more common as you get older. You may wake with it or it may come on as a result of trauma such as whiplash sustained in a road traffic accident. Sometimes it just comes on gradually for no apparent reason.

You may have some or all of the following symptoms:-

- Pain in the neck which may radiate into the shoulder area.
- Stiffness on turning.
- Headaches.

You may have had a neck x-ray and been told you have cervical spondylosis. This is normal wear and tear changes that occur with age.

FOR PAIN RELIEF

- It is important to take any medication prescribed by your GP on a regular basis.
- Heating the muscles around the neck and shoulders can help the muscles to relax and so ease your pain.

(Use a wheat pack heated in the microwave or a hot water bottle wrapped in a towel. Place the heat around your neck and shoulders for 10 to 15 minutes as often as you like during the day. Try to relax in sitting or lying whilst the heat is on. Avoid the use of hot packs if you are unable to detect the difference between hot and cold over the affected area.)

NB: never have the hot pack TOO hot as it is easy to sustain a burn.

POSTURE

You can help reduce your neck pain by improving your posture and keeping the mobility in the joints.

It is important to maintain a good posture at all times.

Sitting

Sit on an upright supportive chair rather than a soft sofa. Sit well back in the chair and place a rolled up towel in the small of your back. Make sure your shoulders are in line with your hips and that your chin is not poking forwards. Sitting correctly reduces the strain on muscles and ligaments.



Standing

Pull in your lower stomach muscles and stand straight with your shoulders back and chin tucked in

Sleeping

Sleep on a supportive mattress, never sleep on your front as this strains your neck.

Often people with neck pain find it beneficial to place a small sized towel rolled up lengthways inside the pillowcase.



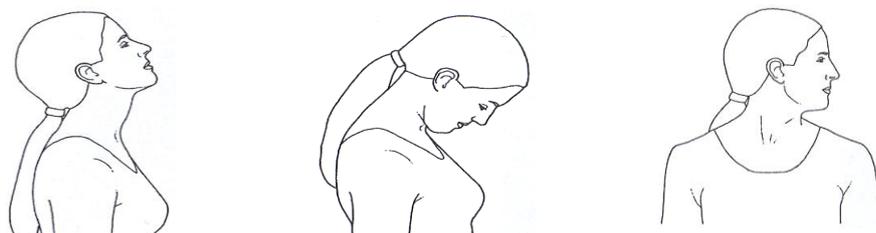
If you sleep on your side, try to make sure your head and neck are straight and in line with the rest of your spine. This may require 1 or 2 pillows

depending on the thickness and firmness. It is better to keep the arm you are lying on in front of the chest.

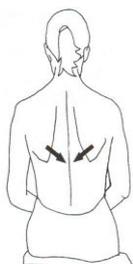
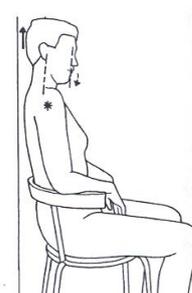
MOBILITY AND POSTURAL EXERCISES

It is important to exercise your neck in order to keep the joints mobile and the muscles flexible.

3 to 4 times a day move your neck through its full pain free range forwards, backwards and turning to the left and the right 5-10 times. **DO NOT PUSH INTO PAIN AND STOP IF YOU FEEL DIZZY.**



Sitting in an upright chair with your back against the wall, place the back of your head on the wall. Slowly slide your head up the wall (nodding action) until you are looking straight ahead and hold this position for 5-10 seconds. Repeat this exercise 5 times.



Sitting in a good position, slowly and gently lift the tip of your shoulders about an inch and slide your shoulder blades down and back. This is a very gentle and small movement. Try and hold for 5 seconds and repeat 5 times.

At work

At work it is important that you maintain as good a posture as possible. For example if you work at a desk you should sit with a support in your lower back and sit well under the work surface. Ensure the desk is at the correct height for you (approximately at elbow height).

When using a computer, ensure your wrists and hands are in a relaxed position. Make sure your computer screen is at eye level and straight in front of you so you are not looking down or at an angle. Try to have an organised work station so that you are not having to reach for things. When using the

telephone, never hold it between your neck and shoulder as this will overstrain your neck. When writing, a slope helps stop your body from leaning forwards keeping your head upright to reduce neck and shoulder strain.

If you have to adopt an awkward position for any length of time, make sure that you straighten up out of that position, ensuring you bring your shoulders, head and hips in line regularly.

At home

It is essential to maintain good posture at all times i.e. head over shoulders, shoulders in line with hips and chin level.

When watching TV make sure the screen is straight ahead of you so you can hold your head in a neutral position.

When ironing ensure the ironing board is at the correct height for you (approximately elbow height) to prevent you stooping. Keep your shoulders back and relaxed. Do not hunch your shoulders.

When reading or knitting etc avoid bending your head for long periods. Rest your arms on pillows for support or sit at a table.

Try to regularly change positions every 20-30 mins.

Driving

When driving it is easy to be tense and sit with shoulders hunched and chin poking forward. Try to relax and position your seat quite upright so you can practice tucking in your chin to place the back of your head against the headrest from time to time. You may benefit from placing a rolled up towel in the small of your back for driving also.

NB; IF YOU FEEL ANY OF THE EXERCISES ARE MAKING YOUR PAIN WORSE, STOP DOING THEM AND SEEK ADVICE.

Queries:-

If you are unsure about any of the advice in this leaflet

Or

If you require further advice from a Chartered Physiotherapist

Please contact your local Physiotherapy Department between 8.30 – 4.30; Monday – Friday on the direct dial numbers below-

Worcestershire Royal Hospital – 01905 760622 / 760187

Alexandra Hospital, Redditch - 01527 512114

Kidderminster Hospital – 01562 513066