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Neck Stretches & Strengthening



Build Your progress!

If your neck is tight, sore, or painful, strengthening your neck muscles can help you to feel better. A home exercise program for your neck can be tailored by your healthcare provider to fit your fitness needs. The home exercise program only takes a few minutes each day and can be done at school, work, or home.

Stretching and strengthening your neck can help to ease your pain as well as build power and stability. When completing this program, remember to:

- These exercises are safe for most people, and your healthcare provider may include special instructions just for you. This may make each exercise more or less challenging depending on your individual needs.

core strength and posture will last a lifetime!

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Chart your Neck Power

Check the boxes each day when you
The work you put in each day improving your

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	W
Week 1				
Week 2				
Week 3				
Week 4				
Week 5				
Week 6				
Week 7				
Week 8				

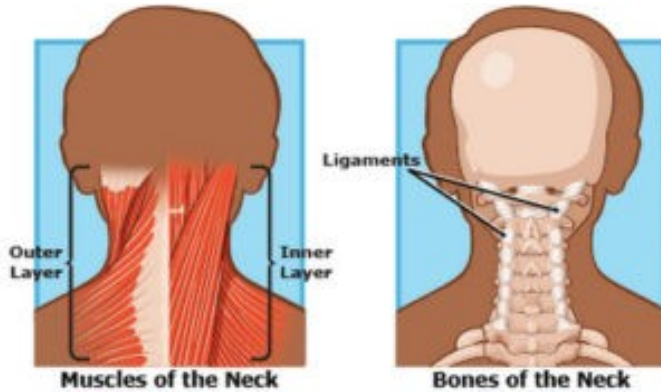


Why is proper posture so important?:

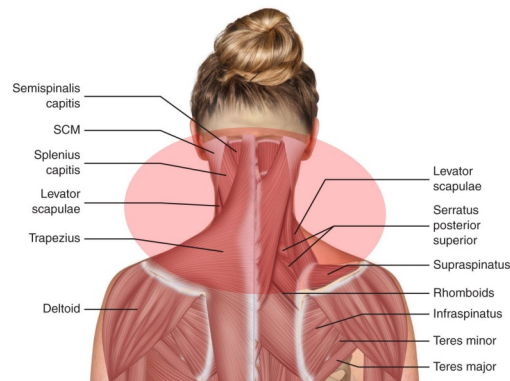
You may not think good posture is a workout, but it is vital for a healthy neck. Proper posture keeps your neck and the rest of your spine in line, which is important whether you're standing, sitting, or lying down.

- Keep your ears aligned over your shoulders and hips—don't slouch.
- Keeping your chin level and slightly tucked in helps to avoid putting stress on the muscles in your neck and shoulders.
- When you sit, keep your feet on the ground. This helps to keep your head and spine aligned.
- Support your low back by sitting firmly against the back of a chair. You can place a towel roll or small pillow behind your lower back for more support.
- When you lie down, whether on your back or your side, it's important to support your neck so that your head doesn't drop down.

Your Neck Mobility



A healthy neck supports the head and is also aligned with your spine. When the parts of your neck are in good condition, you can move your head easily without pain. A strong, flexible neck is important because it has to support the weight of your head. This is about 9 pounds! The neck includes the top seven bones of the spine. These are called vertebrae. The neck bones are aligned in a slight curve and move more than any of the bones of the spine. There are many strong but flexible ligaments that connect the vertebrae and help to support your head.



Your Muscles At Work

The muscles in your neck work with the muscles in your shoulders, chest, and back. By keeping these muscles strong, they help support the bones, ligaments, and joints in your back. Without exercising these muscles, your neck can become stiff and weak.



Arm Lifts

While sitting or standing with your arm at your side, slowly raise it up and forward towards overhead. Hold for 10 seconds, relax and repeat 5 times alternating sides each time.

Reach and Hold

Get on your hands and knees, placing your hands on the floor directly under your shoulders and your knees so they are directly in line with your hips. Bring your head into the neutral position. With your palm down, raise your arm straight in front of you. Hold for 5 seconds and then lower your arm. Switch sides. Repeat three times each arm.



Repeat this same exercise lifting your arm out to the side. Three times each arm.

Finally, repeat the same exercise with your arm moving backwards. Again, hold for 5 seconds and then lower your arm. Repeat this movement 3 times alternating each arm each time.

Shoulder in Motion

Head Lifts

While lying on your back with a small rolled up towel under the curve of your neck and slowly lift your head up and forward as shown. Hold for 10 seconds, relax and repeat 5 times.



Start by lying on your side on a table or bed. Next, lift your head upward towards the ceiling. Your eyes, nose and chin should be pointed directly towards the side the entire time. Hold for 10 seconds, relax and repeat 5 times.



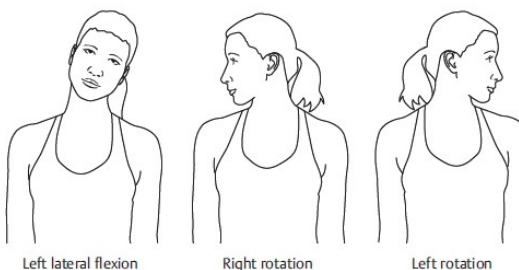
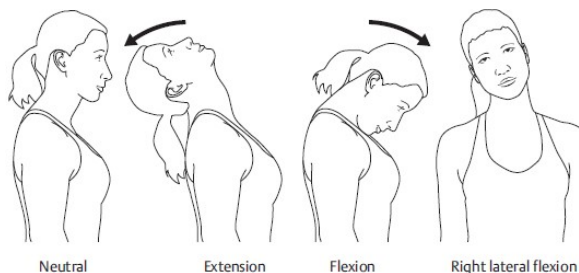
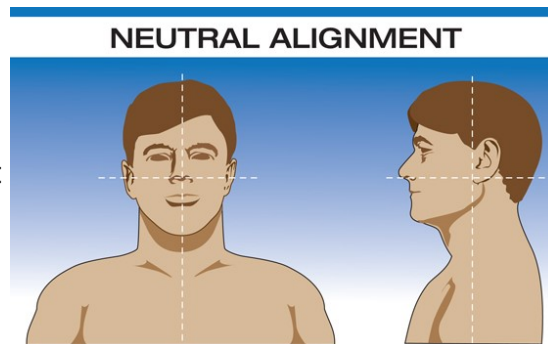
Lie on your stomach and prop up on your elbows.

Then, position your head into a "chin tuck" position (chin/head retracted back with chin tucking towards your chest as shown). Hold for 10 seconds, relax and repeat 5 times.



Finding your neck's neutral position

When your head is not properly balanced, your neck muscles can become sore. In order to prevent neck strain, you should keep your head in the neutral position as much as possible. To find your neutral position, slowly move your head forward and then backward. Your neutral position is where your head is comfortably balanced above your shoulders.



Basic Neck Movements

There are three basic movements of the neck. Each of these movements has its own range of motion, which is the amount of movement that is possible under normal conditions. To avoid injury, you should stay within the range of motion that is comfortable and pain-free for you.

Exercising Your Neck

The exercises contained in this booklet will help to build strength and flexibility in your neck. Remember: start each exercise with your head in a neutral position using slow, steady movements. The more you complete these exercises, the better your neck will feel.

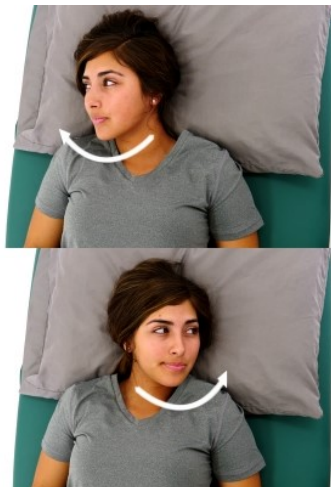
Neck Mobility

Neck Rotation

In addition to improving flexibility for head-turning, this exercise stretches and relaxes the neck muscles.

While lying on your back, turn your head to one side and hold it for 10 seconds, then turn it to the other side and repeat. Do this 5 times each side. Make sure to bring your head back to a neutral position between each turn.

- Move in a comfortable range of motion.
- Move slowly and evenly.



Challenge

You can challenge yourself by rotating your legs and lower body in the opposite direction of your head and neck. Repeat this 5 times in each direction.



Face Clock

For front-facing activities, this exercises increases neck mobility (motion).

While lying on your back with your head in a neutral position, imagine a clock face. Slowly trace the outer edge of the clock face. Move clockwise first, then repeat counterclockwise. Do this 5 times in each direction.



Deep Anterior Neck Flexor Stretch

Place your hands overlapping on your breast bone. Next, tilt your head upwards and away from the affected side until a gentle stretch is felt along the front and side of your neck. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Repeat this sequence 3 times.



Suboccipital Stretch

Gently draw your chin downward towards your chest as your fingers assist in adding a stretch to the back of your head. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Repeat this sequence 3 times.



Levator Scapulae Stretch

Grasp your arm of the affected side and pull it gently towards the opposite side in front of your body. Next, tilt your head downward and to the side looking away from the affected side until a stretch is felt. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Repeat this sequence 3 times.

Neck Motion



Upper Trapezius Muscle Stretch

While sitting in a chair, hold the seat with one hand and place your other hand on your head to assist in bending your head to the side as shown.

Bend your head towards the opposite side of the hand that is holding the chair seat. You should feel a stretch to the side of your neck. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Repeat this sequence 3 times.



Challenge

On breaks, at lunch, and before going home, you can do this exercise at work or school. Sit up straight with your back supported firmly against a chair.



Levator Scapulae Stretch

Grab the chair seat and then tilt your head to the other side, then rotate to the side, then tip downward as in looking at your opposite pocket.

Use your other hand and apply over pressure by gently pulling.

You should be looking towards your opposite pocket of the target side. Hold for 15-20 seconds and then return to the neutral position. Repeat this sequence 3 times.

Neck Flexion

Sitting up straight with your neck in a neutral position, gently push your head forward and down, keeping your chin tucked. Hold for 10 seconds and then return to a neutral position. Repeat this 5 times. Don't push too hard on your head.



Neck Side Bend

Sitting up straight with your neck in a neutral position, gently push your head to the side, keeping your chin tucked. Hold for 10 seconds and then return to a neutral position. Repeat this 5 times. Don't push too hard on your head.

Anterior/Middle Scalene Stretch

While sitting in a chair, hold the seat with one hand. Next, tilt your head to the opposite side and then rotate your head upward. Hold for 15-20 seconds. Return to original position and then repeat. Tip your chin upward to intensify the stretch. Repeat this sequence 3 times.



Neck Mobility

Reach and Pull

Reach forward with both arms parallel to the floor. Clasp your hands and lower your chin towards your chest. Round your shoulders, feeling the stretch between your shoulder blades. Hold for 10 seconds.



Then, unclasp your hand and return to a neutral position. With your palms facing forward, bend your elbows and bring your forearms back until your palms are in line with your ears. You will feel the stretch in your chest muscles. Hold for 10 seconds and then return to the neutral position. Repeat this sequence 5 times.



Shoulder Stretch

With your head in the neutral position, raise your arms to your sides until they're parallel with the floor. Bend your elbows—don't let them fall below shoulder height.



Head Press

Sit up straight with your head in a neutral position and place your fingers against your forehead. Push your head against your fingers while resisting with your hand so your head doesn't move. Hold for 10 seconds, relax, and then repeat 5 times.



Next, place your fingers against the back of your head. Push your head against your fingers while resisting with your hand so that your head doesn't move. Hold for 10 seconds, relax, then repeat 5 times.



Move your fingers to one side of your head. Push your head against your fingers while resisting with your hand so that your head doesn't move. Hold for 10 seconds, relax, then repeat 5 times. Switch your fingers to the other side of your head and repeat the same sequence.



- Don't press so hard that you cause pain or that your head begins to shake.