

Exercises for your neck

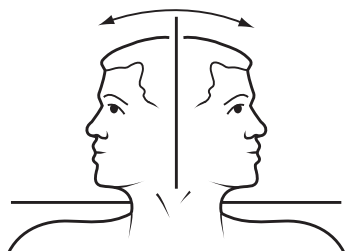
If you have neck pain and stiffness, a course of exercises is important because it loosens the stiff joints (all 35 of them) and strengthens the muscles that control the movements of the neck.

If there is any problematic pain with a particular exercise, you should stop doing it. It is best to keep your head in a neutral position with your chin tucked in before you start.

Do the exercises 2 or 3 times a day. Exercises 1 and 2 can also be done while sitting up, so that all the exercises (except 4) can be done anywhere (such as at the office or in the car when stopped in traffic).

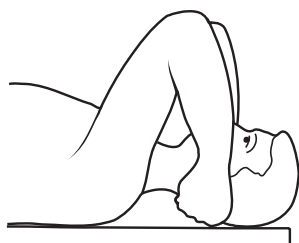
Exercise 1: Neck rotation

Lie on your back on a firm surface such as a floor or bed. Turn your head firmly (but not quickly) to the side by turning your chin towards your shoulders as far as you can. Hold for 3 seconds and then turn to the opposite side. Repeat 5 times.



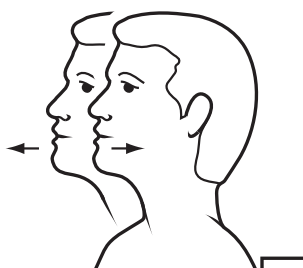
Exercise 2: Hand press

While lying on your back, lock your fingers behind your head and press your forearms against the sides of your head. Press your head down into the locked fingers. Relax. Repeat 5 times. This can be done while sitting upright.



Exercise 3: Bird exercise

Sit upright, tuck your chin in and then thrust it forwards and backwards in a bird-like manner. Repeat this 5 times.



Exercise 4: Resisted side bending

Lie on your side with your head resting on a small, firm pillow. Your head and neck should be in a straight line. Take a deep breath in, hold it and push down hard on the pillow for 7 seconds, then breathe out as you relax. Repeat 3 times. Repeat on the opposite side if this side is tender.

It is important to make sure that you press down on your painful side.

This type of exercise can be used for flexion (lying face downwards), extension (lying on the back) and rotation (lying on the back).



Exercise 5: Resisted side bending

Sit upright in a chair, tuck your chin in and keep your head straight. Place your right hand over the top of your head to grasp the head just above the ear (a left-sided problem is demonstrated) and reach behind your back with the other hand. Pull your head down until it first begins to feel uncomfortable. Take a deep breath in, hold it and press firmly against your hand for 7 seconds (you will be pushing to the left). Breathe out, relax and then pull your head firmly towards the right. Repeat this 3 to 5 times. (Reverse sides for a right-sided problem.)



Exercise 6: Resisted rotation

Sit upright in a chair, tuck your chin in and turn it to the left side to the point of discomfort. Then place your right hand on the back of your head and your left on the chin as shown (a left-sided problem is demonstrated). Take a deep breath in—now try to turn your head to the right but hold it in place by resistance from your hands. As you relax and breathe out, rotate your head firmly but gently towards the left. Repeat 3 to 5 times. (Reverse sides for a right-sided problem.)

