



Personal exercise program

Musculo-skeletal and Pelvic health physiotherapy services
If you wish to provide feedback of our Service please use this web link.



<https://bit.ly/36o67pT>

To contact us:

Call: 0300 555 0123

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Osteoarthritis of the neck

What is Arthritis?

Osteoarthritis, is a condition which affects the joints of the body, causing pain and stiffness. It can also be known as 'wear and tear', 'age related changes', 'degeneration' and in the neck it is called cervical spondylosis. This condition is common as you get older and can cause stiffness and pain in the neck. Arthritis does not always cause pain but can increase the risk of having a flare of neck pain.

What are the symptoms of Osteoarthritis?

Typical physical signs are:

- Tenderness over the joint
- Creaking of the joint
- Joint swelling
- Restricted movement
- Weakness and tight neck muscles
- Stiffness after staying in one position for too long

Clicking and grating noises

The noises in your neck seem louder as it is close to your ears. This is called crepitus as the structures in the neck move across one another. This may be more noticeable during a flare up or at certain times throughout the day. This is a common symptom and may be alarming but is not serious.

Relaxation

Stress can make neck pain worse as it causes the muscles to become tight and over-protective. Learning how to reduce the effect of stress can help relax your muscles. There are many meditation and mindfulness resources available online. Massage, stretching and heat can also help.

Heat/Ice

Apply a heat or ice pack throughout the day to ease pain and stiffness. Ensure you protect your skin to avoid burns or irritation. Do not use ice if you have poor sensation over the area, an infected wound, Raynaud's Syndrome, or Cryoglobulinaemia.

Cervical Myelopathy information, including warning signs:

As you get older, it is common to have age related changes in your neck, and for most people this does not cause any problems. However, in a small percentage of people this progresses and causes pressure on the spinal cord, known as degenerative cervical myelopathy.

Other forms of cervical myelopathy may occur in adults at any age, although these occur less frequently than the degenerative type.

You need to be aware of the symptoms of this condition so that you can seek timely medical assessment if they were to occur. If the condition was to be left untreated it could cause irreversible nerve damage and lifelong symptoms as listed below.

Symptoms of cervical myelopathy may include:

- Neck pain and stiffness with pain in arms and/or legs
- Arms and/or legs becoming weak, numb or tingly
- Loss of control for fine movement of the hands such as doing up buttons or picking up coins
- Imbalance/unsteadiness on walking
- Bladder or bowel incontinence
- Inability to begin to pass urine, or inability to fully empty bladder
- Erectile Dysfunction

If you gradually notice symptoms from the list above, please discuss with your GP as a priority.

If you develop rapid deterioration of the above symptoms seek emergency medical attention.

Please note that neck pain with one sided arm pain, numbness or weakness occurs frequently without myelopathy. These symptoms warrant assessment but do not necessarily require urgent medical management.

If you have any questions about the information and are being seen face to face please speak to your physiotherapist at your next appointment or call us on 0300 555 0123. If you have received this information through the physio advice line or from our website and would like to discuss it with a physiotherapist please call 0300 555 0210.

Exercise - aims

The aim of exercise is to get your neck moving in a normal way therefore improving your range of motion. It can also prevent developing secondary stiffness and weakness around the area, which can arise from avoidance of movement.

Regularly changing position and posture can prevent pain resulting from prolonged stationary positions. Practicing the exercises little and often throughout the day can help.

It is also important to find general exercises you like doing to keep your neck moving and helping to improve your general fitness. ie. walking, swimming, exercise classes, Pilates etc.

Ache, discomfort and a feeling of tightness are all expected during exercises and can even continue after you have finished the exercises for a short period of time. The exercises should not produce any severe pain or make your neck pain worse.

Pain and exercise

Before you start your exercises, give your pain a number out of 10 (0 is no pain and 10 is worst pain imaginable).

A maximum pain level of 3/10 from your baseline number above is acceptable as long as this eases afterwards and did not result in increased pain levels that night or the next morning.

If you cannot complete 5 sets of 5, either because it is too hard or painful then do less sets OR/AND rest more than 2- 3 minutes between exercise sets.

If it does, stop the exercise & once the pain has settled start your next session with less sets OR/AND rest more than 2-3 minutes between exercise sets.

The videos/ pictures show the whole movement of the exercise so do not worry if you cannot do it all. Just move as much as you can tolerate.

Stop these exercises if you feel they are:

- Making your symptoms worse
- Bringing on new pain
- Bring on new symptoms like dizziness

Range of Movement Exercises and Stretches

Repeat these exercises little and often throughout the day



Sitting straight-backed.

Pull your chin in, keeping your neck and back straight (not tipping your head forwards). Hold at the end position and feel the stretch in your neck.

Hold for 5 seconds



Sitting.

Tilt your head toward one shoulder until you feel the stretch on the opposite side.
Repeat to other side.

Hold for 5 seconds

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Sitting.

Turn your head to one side until you feel a stretch. Repeat to other side.

Hold for 5 seconds each side

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Sitting.

Bend your head forward until you feel a stretch at the back of your neck.

Hold for 5 seconds

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Sit or stand. Place your hand on the front of the opposite shoulder. Move your shoulder gently up and back. Control the shoulder position with your fingers.

Bend your neck to the side.

Hold for 5 seconds

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Strengthening Exercises

Amount - Dose

Practice strengthening exercises every other day

Do 5 sets of 5 repetitions of the exercise. Rest 3-5 minutes between each set

See how your symptoms respond to the exercises and increase/decrease the amount of exercises you can do depending on your pain levels

The aim is to increase the amount of repetitions you can do over time



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Stand in front of a mirror. Place your hands against the mirror.

Move your shoulder blades gently back and up (small movement).

Hold 5 seconds.



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Sitting.

Tilt your head to one side while resisting the movement with your hand.

Hold approx. 5 secs. Repeat to other side.

Repeat 5 times.

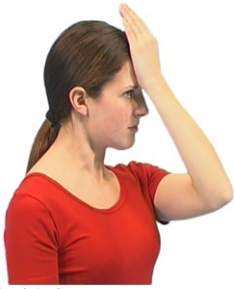


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Sitting.

Try to turn your head to one side while resisting the movement with your hand. Hold approx. 5 secs. Repeat on the other side.

Repeat 5 times.



Sitting.

Try to bend your head forward while resisting the movement with your hand.
Hold approx. 5 secs.

Repeat 5 times.

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Standing or sitting holding 1 kg weights in your hands. Use small weights or cans of beans.

Pull your shoulders up towards your ears.
Hold approx. 3 secs.

Lower your shoulders. Keep your elbows straight throughout the exercise.

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Sit leaning forward with your knees bent and back straight. Hold 1 kg weights in your hands. Let your arms hang straight down. Use small weights or cans of beans.

Squeeze your shoulder blades together while lifting your elbows up.

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Stand with one leg forward and hold an exercise band with one hand. Pull the band down towards your hip.

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Sit or stand holding on to an exercise band with both hands.

Pull the band with both arms pushing the shoulder blades together.

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Aim: Helps strengthen the deep neck stabilizers, including the deep neck flexors.

Instructions:

Place the middle of the band around the back of your head. Grasp the ends of the band in front of your head. Keep your neck in a neutral position with the chin slightly tucked. Extend your elbows, stretching the band in front of you. Slowly return, and keep your neck stable.

Lateral Raise



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Stand tall, with arms by your sides, holding weights. Use small weights or cans of beans.

Lift your arms to the side, keeping elbows straight. Palms face downwards or forwards.

Note: Keep your chest open and try not to shrug your shoulders.



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Shoulder Scaption

Stand tall with arms by your sides, holding weights. Use small weights or cans of beans.

Lift your arms out in front of you, with thumbs pointing upwards. Lift to 90 degrees. Lower your arms to the starting position in a controlled manner.

Note: Don't sway your back and try not to shrug your shoulders.
