Exercises

Neck and Upper Back Stretching

PhysioMed
In touch with the way you work

There are certain activities in the workplace that may contribute to developing a sore neck. These could include repetitive activities at work, sitting or standing for long periods of time, lifting objects or operating machine tools. The nature of these activities can, if not addressed lead to the gradual build up and tension and stiffness in the neck, upper back and shoulder area. These exercises have been designed by our team of Chartered Physiotherapists to assist in preventing the onset of the tension and stiffness or to ease any pain if it occurs.

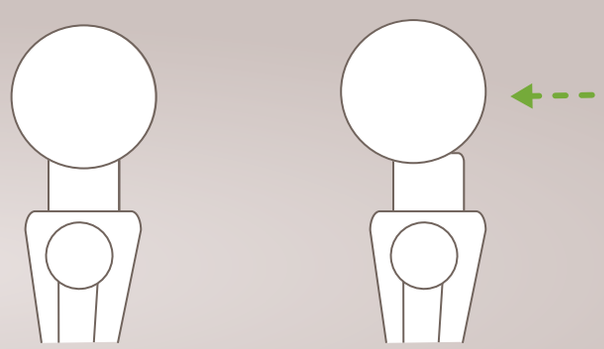
1

Retraction

This is a great, overall exercise for your neck. As some of us sit for long periods of time and not always in the best position, often stooped rather than sat up straight. This position will put a great deal of pressure and stress on the lower part of the neck and shoulders. This simple exercise will stretch out the tissue at the back of the neck and lift a lot of that pressure and stress on the area.

- Sit up straight with a slight curve in the base of the spine
- Focus on an object at eye level as if you were looking at the horizon
- Slowly without moving your shoulder and without looking up or down, bring your head back and tuck your chin in and hold for 2 - 3 seconds

If you do just 5 of these 3 times a day, it could really help reduce the gradual increase of strain on your neck and the shoulder area.



2

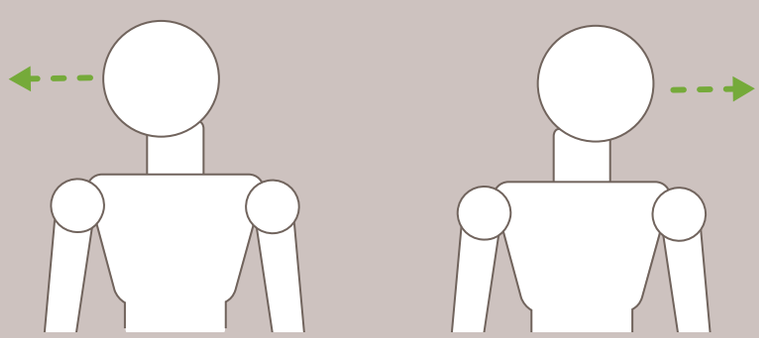
Looking over your left and right shoulder

Over time, as we get a bit older you can start to lose some movement in the neck and rotation is one of those movements. Sometimes people become aware of this when they are trying to reverse the car.

By doing this simple exercise each day, you can maintain this very important movement.

- Sit up straight with a slight curve in the base of the spine
- Gently tuck your chin in as you did with the previous exercise, then turn your head to one side to look over your shoulder
- Return to the start position, release your chin for a short time and then repeat and look over the other shoulder

Do 5 of these to each side, 10 in total once a day.



3

Stretching upper trapezius

This is the large muscle to the left and right of the neck. Often when you are tense or have sat for some time at a desk working, this muscle can become tight. As this muscle becomes tight it pulls on the neck and over time can cause pain and stiffness in the neck.

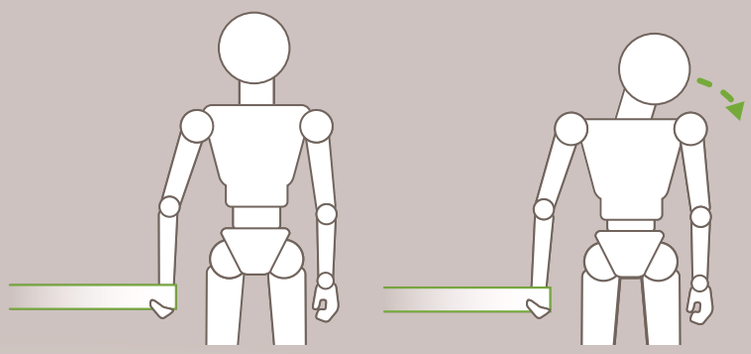
By keeping this muscle loose you can reduce the likelihood of neck pain.

As with all the exercises do this gently and carefully.

- Stand beside a table and hold onto the edge with your hand
- Very gently pull down your shoulder, you will feel a stretch between your shoulder and neck

If you want to increase the stretch, side bend your head to the opposite side (ear to shoulder) and maintain the position for 2 – 3 seconds.

Repeat this 3 times on either shoulder once a day.



4

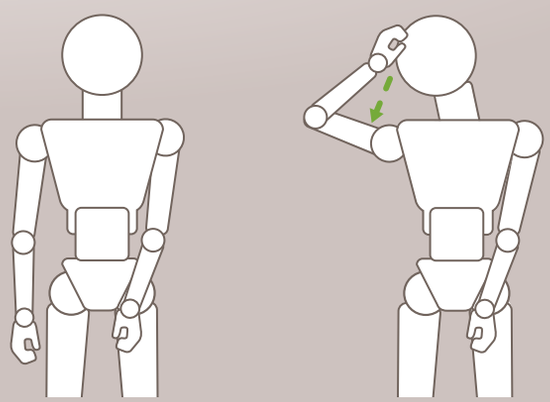
Stretching levator scapulae

The scapula is the shoulder blade and the word levator means to lift, so the levator scapulae muscle lifts the shoulder blade. Similar to the trapezius muscle, this muscle can become tight over time and lead to neck problems. Again, keeping this muscle loose will reduce the likelihood of neck problems starting.

- Place one hand behind the buttock and lower your shoulder, this will start to put the levator scapulae muscle on a stretch
- To increase the stretch turn your head to the opposite side and look down

If you want to increase the stretch even further, gently pull down on your head with the other hand and maintain the position when you feel a stretching sensation.

Again, repeat this 3 times on either shoulder once a day.



Facing backwards

5

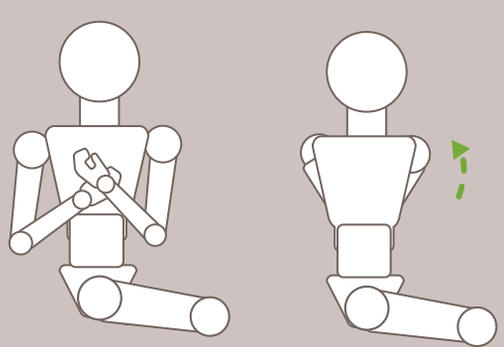
Thoracic spine rotation

The part of the spine between the neck and the lower spine is called the thoracic spine. The thoracic spine has 12 of the 24 bones of the whole spine. The upper part of the thoracic spine is prone to becoming stiff and tight and therefore the movements can become restricted. When this happens it can cause more stress on the neck. It is important therefore to maintain the movement in this part of the spine.

- Sit up straight with a slight curve in the base of the spine
- Cross your arms on your chest and then slowly twist the trunk to either side

Repeat this 5 times on each side so 10 rotations in total, 2 - 3 times per day.

By keeping this part of your spine flexible, it can reduce the stress on the neck and again reduce the likelihood of pain in this area.



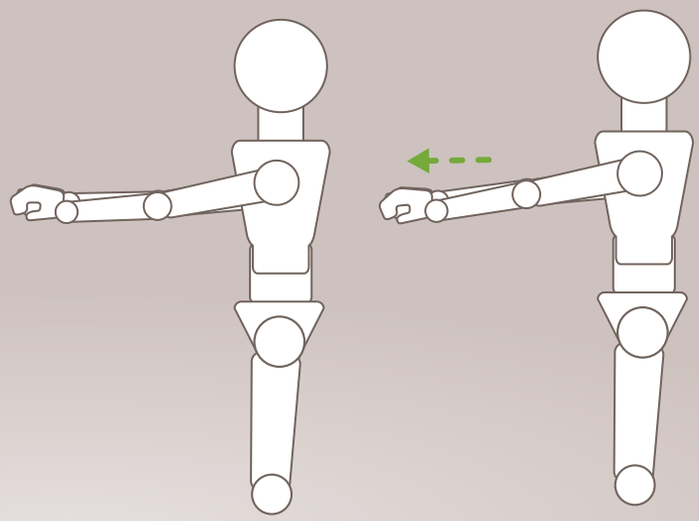
6

Stretching the rhomboids

Your Rhomboids are on the inside of the shoulder blades and can become tight over time from either lots of sitting and computer work or repeated lifting and carrying. Keeping this muscle loose will reduce the tension on the should blades, the upper part of your back and the neck.

- Stand and raise your arms forward grasping your hands together
- Spread your shoulder blades apart by pulling your arms forward until you feel a stretch between your shoulder blades
- Hold this stretch for 2 -3 seconds and repeat 5 times

This is a good general stretch that you can do 2 – 3 times a day.



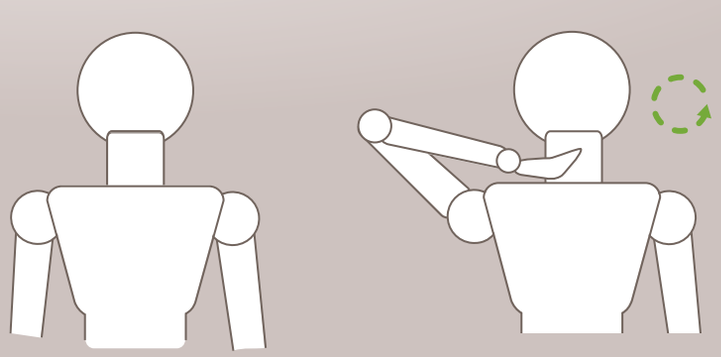
7

Muscle release

The upper trapezius and levator scapulae muscles can become tight through the course of a normal working day and sometimes a gentle massage to the area can reduce the over feeling of tension.

- Sit comfortably and with the left hand gently massage to the right of the neck and then with the right hand massage to the left of the neck.

Just 1 minute of gentle massage on either side is often just what the neck needs to reduce the tension of a day's work.



Facing backwards

Overall, remember to do these exercises slowly and carefully and also remember that by maintaining the movement and strength in your neck and upper spine, you really will help to reduce the likelihood of neck and upper spine problems.

Please be aware Physio Med are not liable for your health and wellbeing as a consequence of following our exercises.

Please consult a doctor and or physiotherapist before starting any new exercise or musculoskeletal rehabilitation programme.