

Neck Exercises

Ask your health care provider which exercises are safe for you. Do exercises exactly as told by your health care provider and adjust them as directed. It is normal to feel mild stretching, pulling, tightness, or discomfort as you do these exercises. Stop right away if you feel sudden pain or your pain gets worse. **Do not** begin these exercises until told by your health care provider.

Neck exercises can be important for many reasons. They can improve strength and maintain flexibility in your neck, which will help your upper back and prevent neck pain.

Stretching exercises

Rotation neck stretching



1. Sit in a chair or stand up.
2. Place your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
3. Slowly turn your head (rotate) to the right until a slight stretch is felt. Turn it all the way to the right so you can look over your right shoulder. **Do not** tilt or tip your head.
4. Hold this position for 10–30 seconds.
5. Slowly turn your head (rotate) to the left until a slight stretch is felt. Turn it all the way to the left so you can look over your left shoulder. **Do not** tilt or tip your head.
6. Hold this position for 10–30 seconds.

Neck retraction



1. Sit in a sturdy chair or stand up.
2. Look straight ahead. **Do not** bend your neck.
3. Use your fingers to push your chin backward (retraction). **Do not** bend your neck for this movement. Continue to face straight ahead. If you are doing the exercise properly, you will feel a slight sensation in your throat and a stretch at the back of your neck.
4. Hold the stretch for 1–2 seconds.

Strengthening exercises

Neck press



1. Lie on your back on a firm bed or on the floor with a pillow under your head.
2. Use your neck muscles to push your head down on the pillow and straighten your spine.
3. Hold the position as well as you can. Keep your head facing up (in a neutral position) and your chin tucked.
4. Slowly count to 5 while holding this position.

Isometrics



These are exercises in which you strengthen the muscles in your neck while keeping your neck still (isometrics).

1. Sit in a supportive chair and place your hand on your forehead.
2. Keep your head and face facing straight ahead. **Do not** flex or extend your neck while doing isometrics.
3. Push forward with your head and neck while pushing back with your hand. Hold for 10 seconds.
4. Do the sequence again, this time putting your hand against the back of your head. Use your head and neck to push backward against the hand pressure.
5. Finally, do the same exercise on either side of your head, pushing sideways against the pressure of your hand.

Prone head lifts



1. Lie face-down (prone position), resting on your elbows so that your chest and upper back are raised.
2. Start with your head facing downward, near your chest. Position your chin either on or near your chest.
3. Slowly lift your head upward. Lift until you are looking straight ahead. Then continue lifting your head as far back as you can comfortably stretch.
4. Hold your head up for 5 seconds. Then slowly lower it to your starting position.

Supine head lifts



1. Lie on your back (supine position), bending your knees to point to the ceiling and keeping your feet flat on the floor.
2. Lift your head slowly off the floor, raising your chin toward your chest.
3. Hold for 5 seconds.

Scapular retraction



1. Stand with your arms at your sides. Look straight ahead.
2. Slowly pull both shoulders (scapulae) backward and downward (retraction) until you feel a stretch between your shoulder blades in your upper back.

3. Hold for 10–30 seconds.
4. Relax and repeat.

Contact a health care provider if:

- Your neck pain or discomfort gets worse when you do an exercise.
- Your neck pain or discomfort does not improve within 2 hours after you exercise.

If you have any of these problems, stop exercising right away. **Do not** do the exercises again unless your health care provider says that you can.

Get help right away if:

- You develop sudden, severe neck pain.

If this happens, stop exercising right away. **Do not** do the exercises again unless your health care provider says that you can.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.