

## How to Help Neck Pain in 6 Simple Steps.

1. Avoid a slouched posture. Slouching pulls the shoulders forward and flexing the lower neck. There is a compensatory extension of the upper neck, which can cause irritation in the facet joints and tighten the small musculature. This is particularly important when using a computer or driving.
2. Heat and ice are both effective at reducing pain. Do not use for more than 15 minutes. Ice, which reduces blood flow superficially, has been shown to improve blood flow to the deep structures of the neck, improving healing.
3. When you sleep, finding a position of comfort is the most important thing. It is normal during recovery to have stiffness in the neck when you first wake up. This stiffness should subside over the course of the day, and as your shoulder and neck muscles get stronger.
4. Easy exercises. Stretching can feel good, but sometimes it can make things worse, especially if you are trying to stretch a muscle that is “tight”. Instead of stretching, movement exercises help to bring blood flow to the injury to allow the muscle to relax. Two easy exercises are:
  - a. Shoulder squeezes. While standing or sitting, squeeze your shoulder blades back and down, as if you are trying to put them in your back pocket. Hold them for 2 seconds and do 10 repetitions. Do multiple times throughout the day, to help assist with your posture.
  - b. Deep neck flexor isometrics. Lying on your back, gently push your head into a pillow while slightly tucking your chin, much in the same way as giving yourself a double chin. Hold this position for 10 seconds and perform 10 repetitions. It is ok to have a small amount of pain, but the pain should not get worse, or radiate into the arm.
5. Walking is important to help increase blood flow throughout the whole spine, allowing for improved nutrient distribution and healing.
6. If your symptoms do not improve in one week, talk to your physical therapist for further evaluation and treatment.

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