Addenbrooke’s Hospital
Outpatient Physiotherapy
Patient Information
Neck exercises and advice

Other formats:
If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team: patient_information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.
Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.
General advice

- It is not safe to drive if you cannot turn your head due to pain.
- Be careful when lifting heavy objects, as this may place extra strain on your neck and shoulder muscles.
- Change positions regularly, it's healthy to move into all the different positions.
- If you find tasks like cleaning or computer work increase pain, break the tasks up into smaller chunks, and only do a little at a time with regular breaks.

Mobility exercises

Bend your head forward until you feel a stretch behind your neck. Repeat ___ times.

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

Turn your head to one side until you feel a stretch. Hold ___ seconds. Repeat to other side. Repeat ___ times.
Pain relief
To help us optimise your treatment, it is important that you have adequate pain relief. If you are suffering high levels of pain please seek advice from your pharmacist or GP.

Further advice
Please be aware that this handout is to be used as a guide. If you find these exercises painful please seek advice from your physiotherapist or GP.

Contacts
Please contact our reception on 01223 216633 to leave a message for your physiotherapist, or to enquire about appointments.

Stretching exercises

Upper Trapezius and Sternocleidomastoid stretch in sitting

- To stretch the right/left side, position the head in flexion, side bend to the right/left, and rotate to the right/left. Support the head and neck with the right/left hand.
- With the right/left hand grasp the chair and slowly lean the body away or toward the left and slightly forward to stretch the right/left side.
- Do not pull on the head with the right/left hand.
- Emphasis can be placed upon nodding the chin towards the chest to further stretch the sternocleidomastoid.
- Hold for _____ seconds. Repeat ____ times.
- Stop this exercise if dizziness occurs.

Chin retraction

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.

Repeat ___ times.
Stretching exercises

**Scalene stretch**
- To stretch the right/left, sit with the opposite hand over the end of the collarbone, near the sternum.
- With the right/left hand, grasp the chair or sit on the hand.
- Take the head backwards slightly, take the right/left ear towards the shoulder and slowly turn the head to the right/left.
- The stretch should be felt in the right/left side of the neck.
- Hold ___ seconds. Repeat ___ times.

**Levator scapulae stretch**
- To stretch the right/left levator Scapulae in sitting, place the left/right hand on top of the head.
- Using the left/right hand to glide the head gently, take the head forward towards your chest.
- Turn the head to the left/right gently and take the left/right ear to the left/right shoulder.
- Do not pull the head with the left/right hand.
- With the right/left hand, grasp the chair or sit on the hand and lean the body towards the left/right until a stretch is felt.
- Hold ___ seconds. Repeat ___ times.

Posture

Maintaining good neck posture is very important. Poor posture may place unnecessary strain on your neck muscles and cause extra discomfort. Your neck is designed to move in all directions, so regularly move it around. However, when you are in one position for a long time, think about keeping your neck in a neutral position in line with your spine.

Keep your shoulders and back relaxed, and your neck long and upright. Try to avoid poking your chin forwards and rounding your shoulders for example, when working on the computer or driving. Avoid keeping your head twisted or tilted to the side for long periods for example when you are watching television.

Sleeping

Think about keeping your neck in alignment and well supported when you sleep so the muscles are able to relax.

- Keep your head in the middle, in line with your spine.
- One pillow is advisable so that your head does not tilt to the side, forwards or backwards.
- Mould the contents of your pillow to provide extra support for your neck where it dips in compared to your head. You may need to use a towel or second pillow for this.