

# Neck pain

**This leaflet offers more information about neck pain. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.**

## What is neck pain and why have I got it?

Most neck pain is caused by strain and tension in the muscles.

This is often due to poor posture whilst working or driving, putting extra strain on the muscles and joints in your neck.

It can also be caused by more sudden forceful movements which may occur in car accidents, known as 'whiplash'.

It can occur as a result of sleeping with your neck in an uncomfortable neck position.

Sometimes, there is no obvious reason for developing neck pain and stiffness.

As you get older, it is common for joints to become degenerative which is a normal part of ageing. This can also cause pain and stiffness.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

- Pain
- Reduced movement
- Stiffness
- Muscle spasm or tight muscles

## How long will it take to recover?

Most neck pain gets better by itself and gentle activity speeds up recovery and stops your pain becoming persistent.

Try to return to normal activities as soon as possible to help maintain movement in your neck.

Most simple strains do not cause lasting problems - your body is very good at healing itself.

## What treatments are available?

Over the counter **painkillers** are often the most effective in relieving neck pain. Speak to your GP or a pharmacist about what medication is appropriate for you.

**Gentle heat** from a hot water bottle can help reduce muscle spasm and pain.

A **cold pack** (an ice pack or a pack of frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) can also give short term pain relief. Use whichever pack you find the most helpful, and apply to the sore area for up to five to 10 minutes, every two hours.

Learning to **relax your muscles** can also be very useful if your neck pain is made worse by stress.

Gentle soft tissue **massage** around the neck, shoulders and upper back may help relaxation and reduce pain. Ask your physiotherapy how to use a massage ball to help with this at home.

## Is there anything I can do to help myself?

You should keep active and maintain your normal daily activities – try to spread them throughout the day as much as possible to avoid further neck pain.

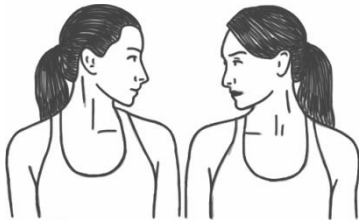
Getting stiff muscles and joints moving may be uncomfortable to start with but will become much easier as you get flexibility back.

Completing the following exercises throughout the day may help reduce your neck pain and stiffness:

1. While sitting, bring your chin down to your chest. Hold for 20 seconds x 3



2. While sitting, look over to your right shoulder, hold for 20 seconds x 3. Repeat to left side



3. While sitting, take your left ear to your left shoulder, hold for 20 seconds x 3. Repeat to right side.



## Useful sources of information

<http://www.csp.org.uk/your-health/conditions>

<https://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/Arthritis-information/Daily-Life/Pain-and-arthritis/Common-aches-and-pains.aspx>

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your neck pain, please contact your physiotherapist on 020 8487 6022 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm). Alternatively contact us by email:

[WACCG.physiotherapyoutpatients@nhs.net](mailto:WACCG.physiotherapyoutpatients@nhs.net)

We are also on Twitter: @QMHMSKphysio

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111



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