



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Neck sprain

Issued by the walk-in services and minor injury units

This leaflet is to give you advice about neck sprain.

What is neck sprain?

The overstretching of the ligaments and muscles of the neck. This can be following a road traffic accident, or it may occur while asleep or during sports.

You may feel pain and stiffness around your neck and shoulders or pins and needles in your hands and feet. You may also experience headaches.

Following the advice in this leaflet your symptoms should gradually improve. If they do not improve, you should seek advice from your GP or physiotherapist.

Alternatives/options for treatment

Most neck sprains do not require x-ray, however your clinician will advise you.

Painkillers

Regular painkillers, such as paracetamol and ibuprofen (if you are able to take it) may help to reduce the pain. You may wish to discuss these with a pharmacist. Good posture and keeping your head up will also reduce pain. Sleep with good support under your neck for comfort.

Ice packs

Ice packs help to reduce inflammation during the early stages following an injury. It cools the area down and reduces swelling.

- Use a bag of frozen peas or crushed ice cubes placed in a plastic bag.
- Protect your skin from ice burns with a damp flannel or cloth.
- Ice packs can be applied two to three times per day for 20 minutes, leaving two hours between applications
- Place your cold pack on top of the painful area and wrap the towel around to hold it in place. Never apply ice directly to the skin as this may cause an ice burn.

Heat packs

Heat may help to soothe pain or relieve stiffness in a long standing problem.

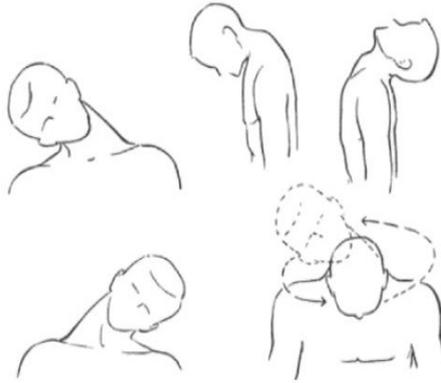
Use a warm towel or hot water bottle wrapped in a towel. Place on the affected area and leave for approx ten minutes. Repeat every two hours as needed (ensure the bottle is not scalding hot). Care must be taken on areas of the body with loss of feeling.

Exercises

Exercise is good for neck sprain. Simple neck exercises are safe and effective, they reduce pain and help you to get on with your life.

Exercises can be done standing, sitting or lying down. There is no single exercise that is right for everyone so try a few to see what is better for you.

If your pain seems worse do the exercises less frequently, do not just stop them. As the pain eases gradually build up the exercises again.



Neck stretching

- Move your neck backwards and forwards.
- Turn your head from right to left.
- Move your head slowly in one direction then in the opposite direction as far as you feel able.
- Move your head towards your left then your right shoulder.
- Repeat about ten times in each direction every hour.

Contact

Should you have any questions or queries please ring 0844 811 8111 and ask for one of the following:

A&E Reception, Wansbeck General Hospital
(Open from 8am to 10pm)

A&E Reception, North Tyneside General Hospital
(Open from 8am to Midnight)

A&E Reception, Hexham Children's Unit, Wansbeck
(Open from 8am to 10pm)

Alnwick Minor Injury Unit (Open 24hours)

Berwick Minor Injury Unit (Open 24 hours)

Blyth Minor Injury Unit (Open from 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

You can call NHS 111 for urgent medical advice 24/7.

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

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General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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