Exercises for Cervical Strain

General Instructions:

Stretching exercises are an important part of treatment to relieve discomfort in your neck. They help restore motion and relieve pain associated with stiffness.

Follow the exercise routine prescribed by your doctor. These exercises are more effective when performed in the shower, after a shower or following application of hot, moist towels. Moist heat relieves pain by increasing blood flow to the muscles of your neck.

Gradually increase the number of times you repeat each exercise as your condition improves, but stop when fatigued. They may be done intermittently during the day, to help relax and relieve tension of the neck and shoulder muscles. Perform exercise #5 every two hours if you work at a desk. Take an exercise break during your work day!

Additional Instructions:

SEE BACK OF THIS PAGE
FOR RECOMMENDED EXERCISES

Helpful hints for a healthy neck

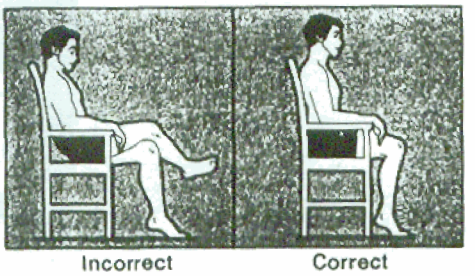
Standing and sitting



Incorrect Correct

While standing or sitting, keep neck drawn back and chin tucked in, not up.

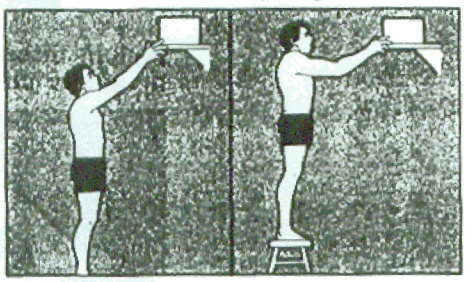
A proper chair will support your arms and shoulders and help prevent strains of the neck due to forward thrust.



Incorrect Correct

Reaching

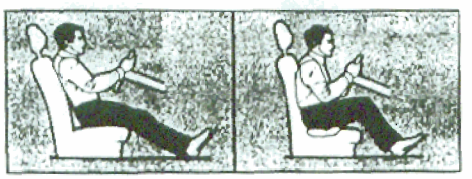
Don't reach for a shelf higher than your head. Stand on a stool. Don't reach or look up for any length of time.



Incorrect Correct

Driving

Don't drive with the seat too far back or too low. If necessary, sit on a pillow or use a seat support such as Sacro-Ease® to avoid stretching up and forward to see over the steering wheel.

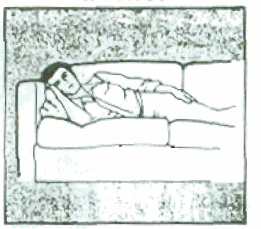


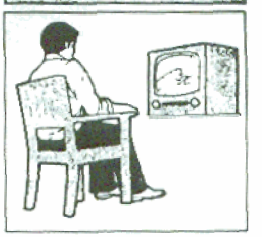
Incorrect Correct

Resting and Sleeping

Don't lie on the sofa to watch TV; sit up properly. Don't prop your head up or forward on high pillows while reading or watching TV.

Incorrect

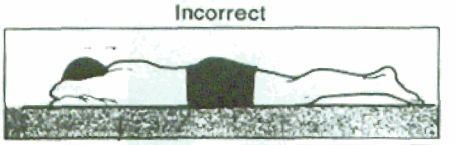


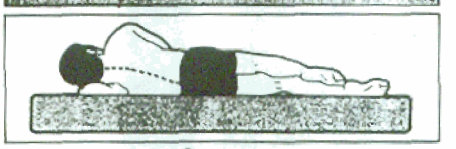


Correct

Don't sleep on your stomach.

Incorrect

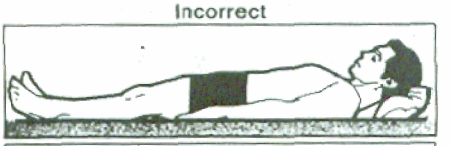


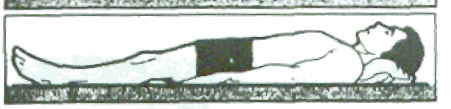


Correct

Lie on your side and adjust your pillow to maintain your head and neck in a neutral position. Keep your arms down.

Incorrect





Correct

If you sleep on your back, put a pillow under your neck, not your head.

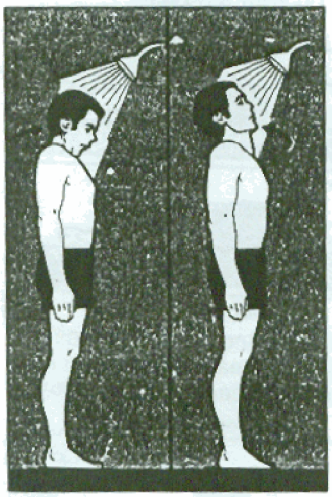
Use a bed board or a firm orthopedic mattress. A proper pillow is 3 - 4 inches thick, 6 - 7 inches wide, 16 inches long. If you have a neck problem, try an inexpensive contoured pillow, such as the Jackson Cervipillo. Don't sleep in a chair.

Exercises:

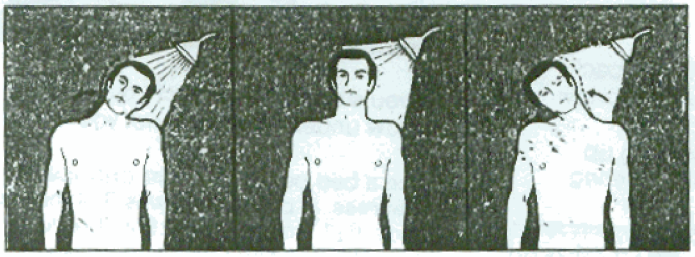
Stand under a hot shower for five to ten minutes and perform the following exercises, twice daily if possible.



1. Stand erect. Turn head slowly as far as possible to the right. Return to normal center position and relax. Turn head slowly as far as possible to the left. Return to normal center position and relax.



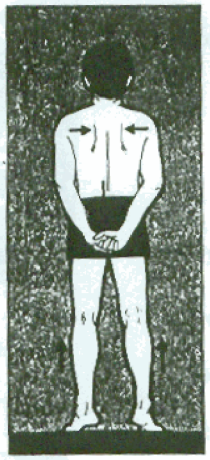
2. Stand erect. Try to touch your chin to your chest, slowly. Raise head backwards, looking up at ceiling, slowly.



3. Stand erect. Try to touch left ear to the left shoulder. Return to normal center position and relax. Try to touch right ear to the right shoulder. Return to normal center position and relax.



4. Stand erect. Raise both shoulders as close to the ears as possible and hold as you count to five. Relax. Stretch your shoulders backward as far as possible and hold, then relax.



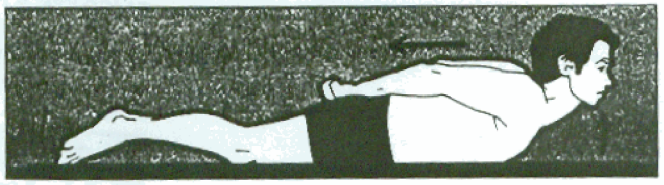
5. Stand erect. With one hand, grasp the thumb of the other hand behind the back, then pull downward towards the floor. Take a deep breath, stand on toes, and look at the ceiling while exerting the downward pull. Hold momentarily, then exhale slowly and relax.

Repeat ten times every 1-2 hours during the day.

Perform these exercises twice daily, preferably after a hot shower.



6. Lie on back, knees flexed, with a small pillow under your neck. Take a deep breath slowly, fully expanding chest, then exhale slowly. Repeat ten times.



7. Lie on your stomach with hands clasped behind back. Pull shoulders back and down by pushing your hands toward your feet, pinching shoulder blades together, and lift head from floor. Take a deep breath. Hold for two seconds. Relax.

Repeat 10 times morning and night.

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