



Physiotherapy Department

Managing Acute

Neck Pain



NECK SPRAIN

How does it happen?

Neck sprain occurs when the head is moved rapidly from one direction to another. These acceleration-deceleration forces may cause pain in muscles, ligaments and joints of the neck and spine.

Symptoms

Symptoms may appear immediately after the accident or have a delayed onset of a few hours or days. The vast majority of people make a full recovery within a number of days or weeks, but for a small percentage of people it may take several weeks or months for symptoms to settle. People recover at different rates as no injury is the same as another. The number and severity of symptoms will vary between individuals.

These may include:

- Pain and stiffness in your neck, jaw, shoulders, arms or lower back
- Difficulty moving your neck
- Pins and needles or tingling in the arms
- Dizziness, headache, blurred vision, pain on swallowing
- Difficulty in concentrating

What is the best treatment?

1. For a good recovery you should start moving your neck as soon as possible, even if there is initial discomfort. This will prevent stiffness, muscle weakness, loss of physical fitness, low mood and longstanding pain and disability.
2. Take painkillers prescribed by your doctor or advised by your pharmacist to allow you to move your neck more easily.
3. Take an active role in managing your neck sprain injury.

Act as Usual

It is normal to experience some mild discomfort during the recovery process but don't stress the neck to a painful level. Try to participate in most of your normal activities.

Be active

Perform general exercise and activity to maintain your health and wellbeing. Undertake a specific exercise regime to improve your movement and flexibility and restore muscle control and support to your neck.

Neck Movement Exercises:

Exercises 1:



Tilt your head downwards and then return back to looking straight ahead, repeat 5 times.

Exercises 2:



Moving the chin first gently roll it back to look up towards the ceiling, repeat x 5 times.

Exercise 3:



Tilt your head towards the side and then return back to looking straight ahead. (Be sure to keep your eyes and nose pointed straight ahead the entire time). Repeat to both sides 5 times.

Exercises 4:



Turn your head towards the side and then return back to looking straight ahead. Repeat to both sides 5 times.

Exercise 5:



Move your shoulders in a circular pattern backwards and forwards. Repeat 5 times in each direction.



The Key Messages to Remember

- ✓ Neck sprain is a condition with a high recovery rate.
- ✓ Any injury can cause pain. However it must be understood that the pain that occurs in the recovery period does not automatically mean that there is further injury or damage. It is best to stay active and continue working.
- ✓ Any initial pain you experience in carrying out the exercises will decrease as the movement in your neck becomes easier. Regaining muscle control with exercise will help reduce your pain. Muscle control = pain control.
- ✓ Sitting in one position for prolonged periods will cause your neck to become stiff. Change position regularly.
- ✓ Think posture. Your physiotherapist can guide you on posture correction exercises. Don't completely avoid painful activities; try altering the way you do them.