

Exercises for Neck Pain

A Physical Therapist's Perspective



Studies show that a combination of manual physical therapy and exercises can provide short- and long-term relief for people with neck pain. The following physical therapy exercises can be part of a home program to relieve neck pain and improve mobility without expensive surgery or side effects of pain medication.

These neck exercises demonstrate a sample and are not intended as a substitute for a treatment program designed by a physical therapist or other health care professional.

To find a physical therapist in your area, visit www.findapt.us

1 Neck Rotations:

This exercise can help to improve neck range of motion.

To perform:

1. Sit with your head facing forward.
2. Keeping your back straight, slowly turn your head to the right until pain, stiffness, or end of motion occurs. Do not go past the point of pain.
3. Now slowly turn your head to the left.
4. Do 1-3 sets of 10 repetitions.
5. Attempt to go further with each repetition as your pain and motion improve.

Do not let your head tilt or your chin drop while rotating your head.



2 Chin Tucks:

This exercise can stretch and strengthen the upper neck muscles and reduce forward head posture.

To perform:

1. Sit with your head facing forward.
2. Place your index finger and middle finger on your chin and guide your head into a “double chin” position.
3. The motion should be directed straight back and you should continue to look straight ahead.
4. Hold this position for up to 10 seconds. Do 1-3 sets of 10 repetitions.

Do not let your head tilt up or down during the exercise.



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3 Neck Strengthening:

This exercise strengthens the deep anterior neck muscles and improves neck stabilization.

To perform:

1. Lie on your back with your head relaxed.
2. Perform a chin tuck (as shown in exercise #2), bringing your chin straight back to create a “double chin.”
3. Keeping the chin tucked, raise your head off the floor and hold this position for 5-10 seconds.
4. Slowly lower your head to the floor and relax your chin tuck.
5. Progress up to 10 repetitions. As you strengthen these muscles, increase your hold time up to 30 seconds.

Do not allow your chin to protrude as you fatigue. Keep your chin tucked throughout the exercise.



Physical therapists are highly-educated, licensed healthcare professionals who can help patients reduce pain and improve or restore mobility—without expensive surgery or the side effects of medications. APTA represents more than 70,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide. Its purpose is to improve the health and quality of life of individuals through the advancement of physical therapist practice. Learn more about conditions physical therapists can treat at www.apta.org/consumer, and find a physical therapist in your area at www.findapt.us.