

Neck and Shoulder Pain

How to Stop Annoying Neck and Shoulder Pain, Keep You Moving and Enjoying the Activities You Love



Neck and Shoulder Pain



Neck and shoulder pain are often inter-related, although they can be found separately. They have similar causes and in some cases are related to the incidence of headache. Most common causes of pain in one or all of these areas is injury to the soft tissue including the muscles, tendons and ligaments. Most cases get better on their own after a few weeks. There are some simple do's and don'ts which you can use to manage your pain, so you can avoid medication, surgery and keep moving.

All about Necks and Shoulders

Vital for movement, the neck and shoulders are a complex area of the body that are susceptible to injury and occasional discomfort due to just how often we use them. The neck is made up of 7 bones called the cervical vertebrae and are linked together by discs and facet joints which, along with the neck muscles, allow us to move our head in multiple directions and hold our head upright.

The shoulder works as a ball and socket joint, allowing for a large range of movement. However, due to this motion, it is also susceptible to injury as the stabilising muscles and ligaments work hard to control the joint.

A message from Clare

“I have treated lots of patients over the years and have seen just how much neck and shoulder pain can affect people's lives, causing them to slowly lose mobility and their enjoyment from life. I am passionate that there are things we can do to prevent or manage neck and shoulder pain without always resorting to drugs and surgery in the first instance. In our clinics we give patients lots of hints, tips and suggestions for improving neck and shoulder health and so I thought it would be useful to share them so that more of you can benefit from some straightforward, no-nonsense advice which really does work.”

Here are some of the hints and tips I have shared with my patients over the years – I hope they are of help to you too. If you just implement one of these strategies each week I am sure in time they will work for you and you'll feel healthier for doing so. If you feel you need more advice then please contact us to discuss your concerns: a simple conversation with a therapist at Back in Motion will help set you in the right direction.

Tips to improve your symptoms



✓ Keep Moving

Movement is vital for a healthy lifestyle and keeping fit is important for everyone. If you suffer from neck or shoulder pain it is particularly important to resist the temptation for prolonged rest. Bed rest might seem like the best option but ultimately will deter any long-term recovery as muscles can waste away from lack of activity and make stiffness worse. Light and gentle movement is always recommended and trying to move a little more each day as avoiding activity can lead to deterioration in the muscle strength.

Simple but effective exercise like neck tilts and turns will help ease pain and help bring mobility back and your therapist will demonstrate and advise on a programme of exercises for you to follow.



✓ Posture

The way we stand and sit is an important element in maintaining healthy joints and there are some simple techniques you can use every day to ensure comfort and wellbeing.

Poor posture in both the sitting and standing position can often lead to problems in the neck and shoulders. Your therapist can examine your posture and offer expert advice, enabling you to enjoy optimum joint health.

Avoid carrying a heavy bag on the same arm and shoulder which is potentially aggravating in the longer term and instead, opt for a rucksack which spreads the weight more evenly.



✓ Sleep

A stiff neck is very common, particularly after sleep, so it is worth investing in a good pillow and mattress. This will also help related back problems which can lead to problems in the necks and shoulder. Sleep on a single low, firm pillow, to allow the spine to remain straight when sleeping on your back. When lying on your side you may need 2 pillows if you have wider shoulders, but too many pillows will distort the spinal position while sleeping. Sleeping on your front with the head turned to the side could be a potential aggravating factor if you have neck pain already.

Many of us spend too much time looking at tablets, our phones or reading at bedtime and looking downwards in a possible slumped position could cause strain on your neck and shoulders.



✓ Relaxation

Stress and tension can contribute to pain or stiffness in the neck and shoulders, so it is important to employ relaxation methods which work for you. If you feel tension in the neck it is worth speaking to your therapist who can advise you on how you can reduce the muscle tension.

A variety of techniques, such as yoga, tai-chi, pilates or massage could help, or just try a simple soak in a bath to de-stress.

✓ Get to know your therapist and Get Physical

If you are suffering from knee pain or think you recognise the twinges increasing as you age, now is the time to seek help from a professional who can help you manage your pain and move towards pain-free movement.

Visiting a hands-on specialist means you're going to get very fast access to care that will soothe and relax tight aching muscles, loosen and lubricate stiff, stuck, painful joints and strengthen the body so you can get back to doing the things you love.

Our Back in Motion therapists use a variety of effective approaches that can limit the use of drugs and help you to avoid surgery whenever possible. It is a relationship worth building to enjoy an active life now and ensure a healthier future.

Note: NHS Physiotherapy departments do not provide you with the hands-on methods of treatment that you need to end knee pain quickly and effectively. Disappointing, but unfortunately true. Back in Motion would love to help you to end your knee pain fast.



Bonus Tips

1. Core Strength and Control in Your Spine and Shoulders

Don't forget the strength of the spine dictates how well you manage when you lift objects or the support your neck and shoulders have when sitting for long periods of time. You or your therapist may need to give some time to incorporating exercises for your back too, especially if you have a history of spinal pain.

2. Watch your body position

Stop and check your position when using computers, tablets and phones. Many of these devices leave us bent over, rounding our shoulders and holding sustained flexed postures which increase the strain on our spinal joints and muscles. This is one of the most common mistakes, which leads to uneven pressure on the spine, and can creep up on you over time.

3. Regular Pilates

Number one for keeping moving and healthy into later life in my book: all joints get a workout to help keep them supple, moving through full ranges of motion and challenging your postural strength and tone of your body. A good all round exercise to keep problems away!

4. Stay Hydrated

Feeling tired all the time and lacking energy could be the result of poor hydration. Cut down on the drinks that create de-hydration such as coffee, tea, alcohol and energy drinks. Dehydration can cause muscle aches and pains, fatigue and dizziness. Drink small amounts of water little and often throughout the day.

5. Stretch and move every day

If you are in the 40 plus age bracket your body will not cope with the forces of daily life like it used to. You need to work harder to maintain your movement and health. A little stretching or movement regime daily will help your body to maintain its flexibility and movement. It's vital to do something to reverse the effects of ageing or at least slow it down!

If you would like more information on any of the hints and tips found here, and think that Back in Motion could help you to better neck and shoulder health and overall wellbeing please call us or pop into one of our local clinics across Norfolk. Our team of highly qualified therapists have helped so many people over the years to feel better and move better and we would love to do the same for you.



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Health advice Disclaimer

We make every effort to ensure we accurately portray any injury throughout this guide and all examples are based on representations of those witnessed as practitioners in our clinics. Therefore, such representations are general in nature and do not correspond to any individual's potential injury. A variety of factors will cause a wide variation in recovery and therefore it is impossible to be 100 per cent accurate in prognosis and diagnosis without a physical examination and likewise the advice given for management of an injury cannot be deemed fully accurate in the absence of this examination at one of the Back in Motion Clinics. We are able to offer this service at a standard charge. Significant injury risk is possible if you do not follow due diligence and seek suitable professional advice about your injury. No guarantees of specific results are expressly made or implied in this report.

