

CHRONIC NECK PAIN

Why do you get pain?

There are several reasons why the neck may become painful.

- Wear and tear on the joints- commonly called cervical spondylosis. This can cause restriction of movement, making the neck feel stiff.
- Overstretching the ligaments and tendons: usually a result of poor sitting or standing posture, too soft a bed or the wrong pillow.

Treatment

In most cases of people with chronic neck pain it is important to get their neck and shoulders working properly again. It is very important to remain active and to remember that even if it hurts, you are not damaging your neck any further.

Exercise

Exercise keeps you strong and increases the levels of the body's natural painkillers-endorphins. Start slowly and gradually build up over a few days or weeks, then keep it up. You may ache at first but this does not necessarily mean you are doing any harm.

Caution stop any exercise if dizziness occurs; avoid swimming breaststroke for long periods.

Modify your activity

Some activities involved in your daily life need to be done with care and may need to be modified. At first do not do any activity for more than 20-30 minutes.

Posture

Avoid stooping. Sit up straight and use a rolled up towel/back cushion/ a roll in the small of your back for support.

Sleeping

Try using one good pillow or place a neck roll in your pillowcase.

Driving

Adjust your seat position, and break up a long journey.

Carrying

Keep to a minimum, balance the weight evenly by carrying smaller amounts in each hand and avoid long trips.

Coping Strategies

- People who cope well with neck pain remain positive and stay active therefore keep up your daily activities, but bear in mind the advice in this leaflet.

- Avoid the “good day- bad day” see-saw, avoid overdoing things on good days and doing nothing on the bad days. Try and keep exercise and activity on an even keel by moderating activity on the good days and keeping going on the bad days.

- There are treatments, which can help to control the pain these include:
 - Painkillers or anti-inflammatory tablets.
 - Heat or Cold- try a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp tea towel, or a hot water bottle applied for 15minutes.
 - Caution- never uses on areas where you can’t feel hot or cold, where the skin is broken, or where you suffer from circulatory problems.
 - Relaxation helps to decrease muscle tension.
 - Massage.

Relaxation

When you experience neck pain, there is a natural tendency to tense the shoulders and hold the neck stiff, increased muscle tension can actually cause more pain. Relaxation, especially of the neck and shoulders, should therefore be practiced wherever possible.