

ROUTINE FOR WEARING CERVICAL COLLARS

Collars can be useful when worn immediately after an accident, when moving the head causes pain and may actually cause more damage to the swollen soft tissue in the neck.

However if the head is kept still for too long and a collar worn at the same time, this can actually slow down the healing process and cause a lot of stiffness and weakness of the neck muscles, which can then lead to more pain.

These notes are intended to be general guides on how to use a collar for the best recovery. They are not strict rules as everyone will recover at different speeds.

1. During the first 48hrs at least 2 or 3 times each day, whilst lying down, take the collar off and move your head gently from side to side as far as you can without causing extra pain.
2. After the first 48hrs try taking the collar off every few hours whilst sitting up. In this position, turn your head as far as you can to the left and then to the right. Then take your left ear as far as you can towards your left shoulder, repeat to the right. This exercise should also be done gently so as not to cause extra pain for the first 48 hours.
3. If you have been wearing your collar for a week, then you should start trying to go for periods of time without using it and gradually increase these over a few days until you can manage without it for a few hours at a time. Whilst not in the collar you should be gently moving your head in all directions- avoid rolling/circling your head. It is now safe to move your head into your painful limit without causing further harm.
4. After two weeks you should be aiming to discard the collar completely.

If you have severe pain or any dizziness whilst trying these exercises, stop until you have either seen a doctor or physiotherapist who will tell you what to do.

This information apply mainly in the case of an acute neck pain of muscular origin and does not suggest the same in the case of management of chronic neck pain +/- arm referral symptoms.