

Basic Conditioning Exercises for the Neck

In order to strengthen your neck and keep it problem-free, your doctor may recommend home traction along with neck exercises. If exercising is painful, use less force and limit the number of repetitions. Stop doing any exercise that causes pain. Here are some simple exercises to do at home, 3 times at each session, 3 sessions a day. Apply moist heat to neck before you start.

Range of Motion Exercises

For stretching your neck muscles. Sit erect, stay relaxed, and move gently while doing these exercises.



Head Turn

Slowly turn your head to the right until you feel the stretch of the neck muscles, hold, then return to the center. Do the same to the left side.



Head Tilt

Tilt your head straight over towards your right ear, hold, then return to the center. Do the same to the left side.



Head Drop

Drop your chin down slowly toward your chest, hold and relax, then bring your head back up.



Head Bend

Tilt your head backward so you can see the ceiling, hold, then bring your head back down.

Isometric Exercises

For strengthening your neck muscles. Don't hold your breath as you do these. Hold for 3 counts, then relax.



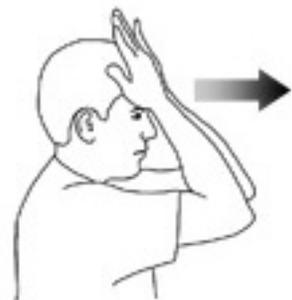
Resist Head Turn

Press your hand against your temple. Try to turn your chin toward your shoulder, but resist any motion.



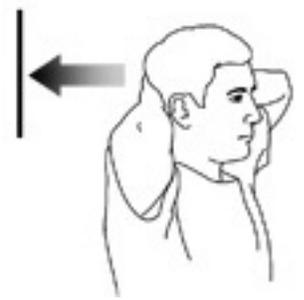
Resist Head Tilt

Press your hand against the side of your head. Try to bring your ear toward your shoulder, but resist any motion.



Resist Head Drop

Press your forehead into your palms. Try to drop your chin to your chest, but resist any motion.



Resist Head Bend

Press both hands against the back of your head. Try to tilt your head backward, but resist any motion.

Cardiovascular Exercise

Any activity that raises the heart rate and breathing rate strengthens the spine, and the neck and shoulder muscles as well. Such exercise carries risk too though, so check with your doctor before beginning your home program.

Walking, probably the safest and most efficient form of exercise, is especially recommended for older people. Walk with your head high, chin level, and shoulders erect, 1 hour a day, 3 to 5 days a week. You can increase your speed over several weeks.

Jogging, biking, and swimming provide good exercise also. Again, build up gradually, and follow your doctor's recommendations.