

## NECK EXERCISES AND ADVICE

Many people who have been diagnosed with Spasmodic Torticollis suffer from pain and stiffness in their neck. The pain experienced may vary in intensity depending on your daily activities. Your symptoms can be aggravated by poor posture, for example, sitting slouched or working in the same position for a prolonged period of time.

To help manage your neck condition, try the exercises recommended by your physiotherapist on a daily basis: For each exercise sit with your back straight.

### EXERCISES

#### 1 Retraction

Pull your chin in as shown.

Hold the stretch at the back of neck for 5 sees. (Imagine you are pulling your chin off a shelf. Do not tip your head up or down).

Repeat 10 times x 2 daily.



#### 2 Rotation

Turn your head to one side until you feel stretch in the opposite side of your neck.

Hold for 5 seconds then repeat to other side.

Repeat 10 times x 2 daily.



#### 3 Side flexion

Tilt your head towards one shoulder until you feel a stretch on the opposite side of your neck.

Hold for 5 seconds then repeat to the other side.

Repeat 10 times x 2 daily.



#### 4 Flexion

Bend your head forward until you feel a stretch at the back of the neck.

Hold for 5 seconds.

Repeat 10 times x 2 daily.



**5 Extension:** Bend your head backwards as far as is comfortable.

Hold for 5 sees.

Repeat 10 times x 3 daily.



**6 Shoulder retraction:** Sit with your back straight and feet firmly on the floor. Pull your shoulder blades together while turning your thumbs and hands outwards.

Repeat 10 times x 3 daily.



## **POSTURAL ADVICE**

### **Sitting**

When sitting for prolonged periods of time it is important that you support your lower back, for example, use a lumbar roll (you can use a rolled up towel or small pillow and place it at your lower back). This will help to support the natural curve in your lower back and prevent slouching.

When watching television try to position yourself so that your neck is not always in a flexed position. If possible turn your head away from the side affected by the torticollis—for example, if you have a right-sided torticollis turn your head towards the left to view your television screen.

### **Sleeping**

Try to avoid using more than two pillows when sleeping. Ensure that your head is supported comfortably to lie in line with rest of your body.

### **Standing/walking**

Aim to keep your head up when standing/walking and try to keep your shoulders relaxed and down away from ears if possible (this will help to decrease tension in neck muscles). When looking or talking try to look away from the affected side.

## **OTHER ADVICE**

### **Use of heat pack**

When muscles of the neck are in spasm or if you feel an increase in neck pain a heat pack can be used for 10-15 minutes daily to help ease these symptoms.

Never apply a heat pack directly to the skin—always wrap in towel before applying to the painful area. Can apply either in sitting or lying position whichever you find more relaxing. Always adhere to the manufacturer's guidelines when using your heat pack to avoid the risk of burning your skin.

### **Appropriate use of painkillers**

If you are in pain then take your prescribed painkillers at the stated times of the day—this will help to control your pain and stop it building up.

### **Stress and muscle tension**

Stress may increase your neck pain. You can learn to reduce the effects of stress by recognizing it in yourself trying muscle relaxation and breathing control.

By following these instructions you will hopefully be better able to manage your neck pain or stiffness. If you need further advice ask your physiotherapist.