Canadian Chiropractic Guideline Initiative
ADVANCING EXCELLENCE IN CHIROPRACTIC CARE

Date: _____

Neck Motor Control & Strengthening Exercises 1-7

(For recent onset neck pain we suggest supervised graded exercises)

Click on the title or find all the exercises on CCGI YouTube

✓	Exercises	Instructions	Notes
	 **Neck motor control**	Lie on your back with your knees bent without a pillow under your head and neck. If this is not comfortable, place a small, folded towel under your head for support. Start by looking up at point on the ceiling, then, with your eyes, look at a spot on the wall just above your knees. Feel the back of your head slide up the bed as you perform a slow and gentle nod, as if you're indicating "yes." While doing the exercise, place your hand gently on the front of your neck to feel th superficial muscles. Make sure they stay soft and relaxed when doing the head nod movement. Stop at the point you sense the muscles are beginning to harden, but keep looking down with your eyes. Hold the position for ten seconds then relax. Look up to a point on the ceiling to resume the starting position. Repeat 10 times.	
	 **Strengthening neck retraction (sitting)**	Tuck in your chin after slightly elevating your head toward the ceiling, as if your ears were pivoting point. Completing this movement should take two to three seconds. Repeat 10 times.	
	 **Strengthening neck retraction (supine)**	Lying comfortably on your back without any pillow, slide your head upward while keeping you chin tucked in. You should feel a gentle stretch behind your neck. Completing this movemen should take 2-3 seconds. Repeat 10 times.	
	 **Isometric strengthening in flexion (standing)**	Tuck your chin in and place the palm of your hand over your forehead. Without any head movement, gently push your forehead against your hand. Maintain the contraction for 2-3 seconds. Do two series of 10 repetitions daily. Please remember to keep your chin tucked in before each repetition.	
	 **Isometric strengthening in extension (standing)**	Tuck your chin in and place your hand behind your head. Gently push backward against your hand without any neck movement. Maintain the contraction for 2-3 seconds. Do two series of 10 repetitions daily, and remember to keep your chin tucked in before each repetition.	
	 **Neck extension supine**	Support the back of your head with one hand while lying on your back at the end of a bed or sofa. While keeping your chin tucked in, move your head backward and return to the neutral position. At all times, don't let your head movement forward. While making sure the movement is painless, maintain a slight tension in the front muscles of your neck. Completing this movement should take 2-3 seconds. Repeat 10 times.	
	 **Retraction flexion supine**	Lie on your back and tuck your chin in by sliding your head upward. Slightly raise your head towards your sternum while keeping your chin tucked in. Do 2 series of 10 repetitions daily.	

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https://www.canadianchiropracticguidelines.ca/

Bussières AE, Stewart G, Al-Zoubi F, Decina P, Descarreaux M, Hayden J, et al. The Treatment of Neck Pain–Associated Disorders and Whiplash-Associated Disorders: A Clinical Practice Guideline. Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics. 2016;39(8):523-64.e27.

Neck Motor Control & Strengthening Exercises 8-12

(For recent onset neck pain we suggest supervised graded exercises)

✓	Exercises	Instructions	Notes
	 **Retraction rotation supine**	Lie on your back and tuck your chin in by sliding your head upward. Slightly raise and turn your head toward the left while keeping your chin tucked in. Do 2 series of 10 repetitions on each side daily.	
	 **Isometric extension strengthening with rubber band (sitting)⁺**	In a sitting position with your chin tucked in, place and elastic band behind your head. Move your trunk backward from the hips, keeping your back and neck straight. Do 3 series of 10 repetitions daily. ***⁺Not recommended for recent onset neck pain***	
	 **Isometric flexion strengthening with rubber band (sitting)⁺**	In a sitting position with your chin tucked in, place an elastic band across your forehead. Bring you trunk forward from the hips, keeping your back and neck straight. Do 3 series of 10 repetitions daily. ***⁺Not recommended for recent onset neck pain***	
	 **Neck extensor strengthening**	• Lie on your stomach, propped up on your elbows. Push through your elbows to prevent your chest from sagging between your shoulder blades. First, just concentrate on your chin. Tip it up and down as if saying yes. It is a gentle, but important exercise for the small muscles in the upper part of your neck. • Secondly, gently turn your head from side to side as if you were saying no. In other words, you only need to turn your head about 30 degrees to each side. It is a gentle but important exercise for other small muscles in the upper part of your neck. • Thirdly, lower your head and neck to look at your chest, then, raise and curve your neck back Pretend you have a book between your forearms. As you lift your head back, keep reading your book. This helps to keep the upper neck in a neutral position to focus the exercise on the lower regions of your neck. To begin with, perform each exercise 5 times as one set. Try to build up to 3 sets, and eventually 3 sets of 10 repetitions each. Remember to keep pushing through your elbows to keep your chest raise through the whole set. Have a rest between sets.	
	 **Additional neck strengthening exercises**	Head lift exercise: The weight of your head is enough weight to lift. Start by sitting on a chair close to a wall. Rest your head back on the wall. Slide your head back on the wall to nod your chin and hold it in this position. Then, just take the weight of your head off the wall – your hair still touches the wall. Hold for 5 seconds and relax. Start by doing 3 sets of 2-3 repetitions. Then gradually build up to three sets of five repetitions. Shifting the chair a little further from the wall makes the exercise more difficult. You can progress the exercise by moving the chair away from the wall in 5 cm stages. Variation: Lie resting on your head on 2 pillows. Slide the back of your head up the pillow to nod your chin and hold it in this position. Then, try to just lift the weight of your head until it just clears pillow. Hold for 5 seconds and relax. Start by doing 3 sets of 2-3 repetitions and gradually build up to 3 sets of 5 repetitions. The exercise can be progressed by removing one pillow and performing the exercise in the same way. Please note in all variations of the exercises, keeping a double chin – is a very important aspect of the exercise.	

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