

# Neck pain and stiffness

## Information and exercises

As we spend an increasing amount of time working with screens and therefore in static, and usually not very good postures, more of us are experiencing neck and shoulder pain and stiffness as well as headaches. This information sheet is intended to help you look after your neck and spine and address some of the problems that come with living and working in the information age.



For more useful info about our bodies and the way they work, scan the QR code opposite or visit [weybridgephysio.co.uk](http://weybridgephysio.co.uk)

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Please note that this is a general exercise and information sheet and is not intended to be a substitute for detailed assessment and treatment that may be required in some cases. Always seek the advice of a Chartered Physiotherapist or GP for any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

### General advice

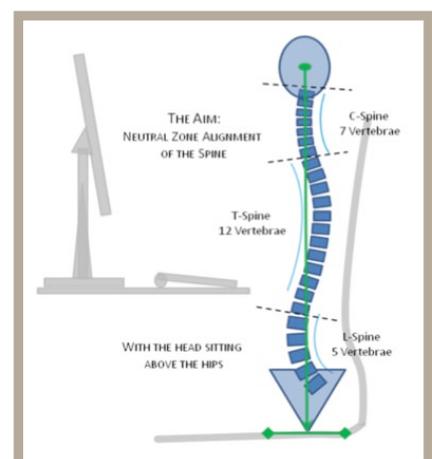
1. Your posture and how you sit/stand/walk is often one of the main causes of neck pain and headaches so be aware of how you do these things
2. Our joints and muscles are designed to move so avoid long periods of sitting and using screens, PC's and especially tablet computers and mobile phones (Watching movies on your phone or tablet is generally not good for your neck!).
3. If you spend a lot of time using a computer, try to get up and away from your computer every 30 min
4. If your symptoms are not helped by these basic exercises, contact your GP or Chartered Physiotherapist, who will be able to assess your situation in greater detail

### Workstation advice

It is important to remember that we are not designed to sit for long periods. But as our lives increasingly involve the use of computers and other screen based devices we should try to use our spines and necks in a sustainable way.

Here is a diagram that gives a general layout of a workstation. Note that the top of the screen is almost in line with the top of the head and that the keyboard is away from the screen.

If you use a laptop, it is a good idea to use a separate keyboard and mouse, if not an external screen as well.



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Take your time in doing these exercises, think about the movement, as it is how well you do each exercise that is important and not how fast. If you experience any sharp/stabbing pain, pins & needles/numbness or any dizziness, stop the exercise and contact your GP or Physiotherapist.

## Improving your posture – The Sitting Tall position

**Aim:** To become more aware of your posture and spend more time in a healthy position

**Method:** Picture your body as a filing cabinet that is tilted forward and your head as the top drawer that has slid open.

Straighten the filing cabinet by lifting the sternum (breast bone) upwards but don't over-arch your lower back. Hold this position for 5 seconds. This is the "Sitting Tall Position".

Reverse this movement by lowering your sternum and allowing it to drop inwards. Repeat this in sets of 5, 5 times a day.



## Neck retraction

**Aim:** To correct the position of the head on the neck and reduce the strain on the joints of the upper neck

**Method:** In the Sitting Tall Position, think about and make a small controlled movement of closing the top drawer of the filing cabinet, by moving your chin inwards, lengthening the back of the neck. It may help to think of yourself being pulled upwards to the roof by a ponytail.

Hold this position for 5 seconds and repeat in sets of 5, 5 times a day.



## Neck rotation

**Aim:** To keep the joints and muscles of the neck moving in a controlled and co-ordinated way.

**Method:** In the Sitting Tall Position, keeping your chin tucked slightly in, turn to the left following a horizontal line with your eyes. Turn as far as is comfortable and hold this position for 2-3 seconds. You should feel a gentle stretch in the muscles of the neck. Return to the middle and repeat in the other direction.

Repeat this 5 times each way.



## Thoracic rotation

**Aim:** To keep your thoracic spine (middle back) moving and thereby reduce the strain on your neck and shoulders.

**Method:** In the Sitting Tall Position, cross your arms as shown. Turn to the left as far as is comfortable and hold this position for 2-3 seconds. You should feel a gentle stretch through the mid-back. Return to the middle and repeat in the other direction.

Repeat this 5 times each way.

