

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

Twitter.com/WhitHealth
Facebook.com/WhittingtonHealth

Whittington Health NHS Trust
Magdala Avenue
London
N19 5NF
Phone: 020 7272 3070
www.whittington.nhs.uk

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Neck and Back Pain/Injury

A patient's guide



Back pain

If you have strained or injured your back, follow these simple guidelines to help prevent a recurrence of your problems.

Lift correctly; place one foot in front of the other.

Keep your back straight, bend hips and knees, keep object close to body. Lift by straightening legs.

Stand correctly; good posture is important to prevent back strain. Stand erect, tuck bottom and abdomen.

Work at correct height; avoid stooping. Work surfaces should be level with hip when standing.

Sleep on a bed with a firm base.

Get out of bed by rolling onto side, bend knees, and then swing both legs together over edge of bed and push up on your elbow.

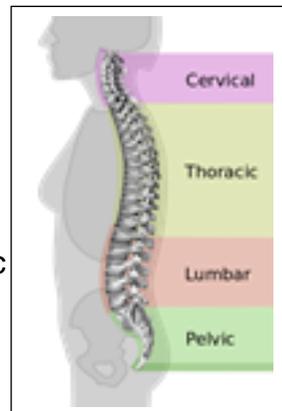
Sit correctly; back and thighs should be well supported.

Back to Fitness

- Avoid being overweight.
- Keeping fit is very important. Swimming is the best form of exercise.
- Learn to relax. Pain causes tension which increases pain. Relaxation reduces tension and therefore reduces pain.
- Exercise. It is important to continue your exercises as these strengthen your back and abdominal muscles and keep your spine from getting stiff.

Know your back.

The bones of the spine in the neck, upper and lower back are called vertebrae. These bones protect the spinal cord. Between each vertebrae is a pad which acts as a shock absorber. This pad or disc has an interior made of a stiff jelly-like substance and a tough exterior.



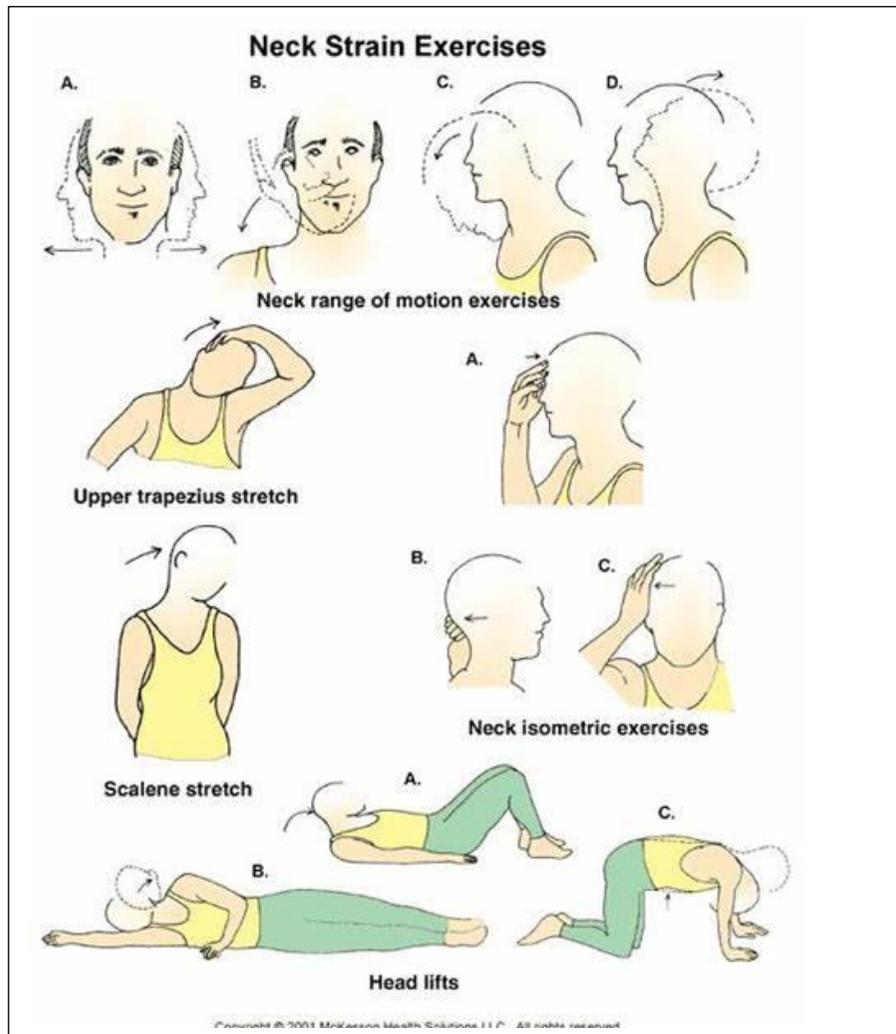
When to contact your GP or the hospital:

If you experience:

- Numbness in your legs or arm.
- If you are unable to pass urine, or control your bladder or bowels, if the area around your bottom or your perineum (the area between your bottom and genitals) become numb.
- If you experience weakness in our arms or legs.
- If simple pain relief does not control the pain.

Neck Pain Exercises

Make sure you have taken pain relief and are sitting up and comfortable before doing exercise. Gentle exercise initially, increasing intensity over time, do each exercise 10 times an hour when awake. You will not do any damage if you proceed slowly at first.

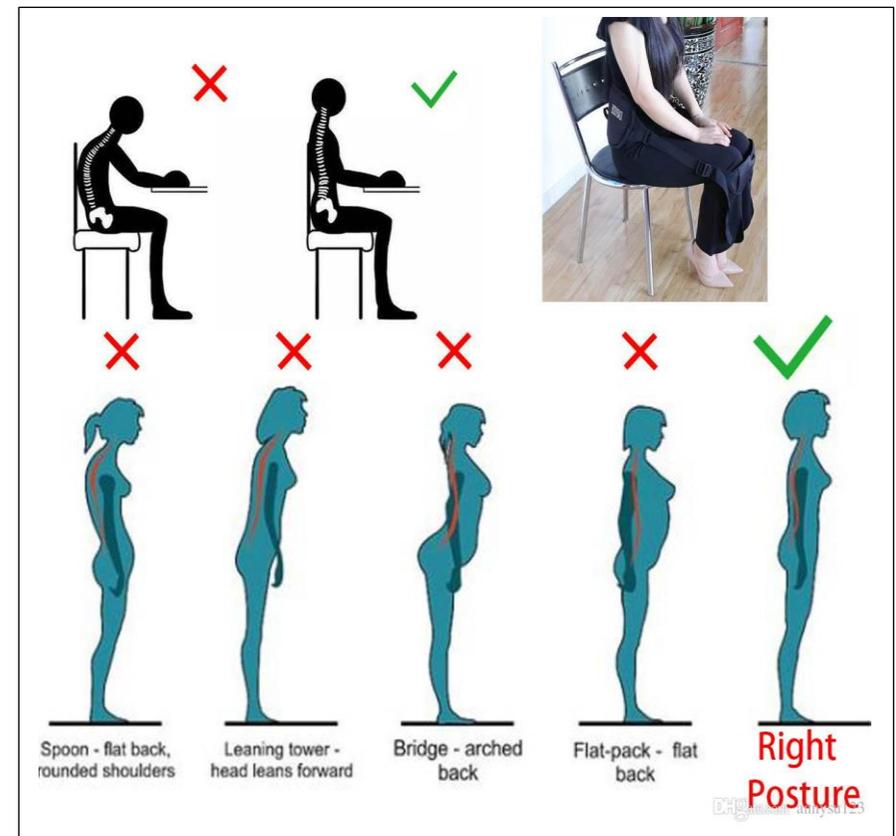


Back Pain..cont.

There are many causes of back pain, e.g.:

- Poor posture
- Strained muscles and ligaments
- Wear on the joints
- Age related degenerative changes, i.e. “slipped discs”, damage to discs may cause pressure on a nerve root and this may produce pain and tingling in the legs.

Back to Work
Always keep your back straight



Back Pain exercises

Gentle exercise initially, increasing intensity over time. Ever 4-6 hours. Make sure you take pain relief before doing exercise. You will not do any damage if you proceed slowly at first.



Neck Injury

Neck injuries and pain can happen during or after road traffic collisions, sports and sudden movement. Pain can develop in the neck muscles, even a couple of hours after the injury happened. It usually gets worse over the first day or so but does gradually get better, even though this may take some time.

The pain and stiffness should start to wear off in four days.

You should:

- ✓ Take simple pain relief, i.e. paracetamol or ibuprofen
- ✓ Apply an ice pack or a cold compress to your neck for 10 minutes. (always wrap the ice in a damp towel and never put it directly onto your skin)

Neck Posture

The best way to lie in bed to void neck pain
Always sleep on a firm bed either on your back or on your side, but never sleep face down.

If you sleep on your side, you should:

- ✓ Make sure that your head and neck are in line with the rest of your spine.
- ✓ Use enough pillows to keep your head straight.
- ✓ Keep the arm that you are lying on in front of you.

If you sleep on your back you should:

- ✓ Put a rolled up towel at the back of your neck at night- it might help you to feel more comfortable.