

# Neck Sprains

Sprains are painful because the muscles and ligaments have been injured. This pain often comes on a few hours after the injury occurred. It usually gets worse over the first 1-2 days and then gradually gets better over a few days or weeks. X-rays are often unnecessary.

You may experience a mild headache muscle pains in the arms and back, jaw clicking or dizziness. These symptoms come on for many reasons related to muscle tension - none of them serious- and will get better. The best treatment is to correct your posture and get rid of the neck pain by following the advice outlined below.

You are strongly encouraged to move your neck and return to your normal activities as soon as possible. Neck exercises should be gentle and slow, especially during the first few days. They will probably cause some pain due to the process of healing. However, pain should not be excessive and neck movements should not cause other symptoms i.e. pins and needles, numbness or weakness in your arms and hands. If any of these occur please telephone the Emergency Department for advice.

## Do

- Turn your head slowly to either side to look over your shoulders
- Slowly take your left ear down towards your left shoulder and repeat on the other side
- Move your chin towards your chest i.e. face downwards and then raise your face up towards the ceiling
- Sitting down, gently lift one arm up above your head, then gently lower it. Repeat with other arm.

**Repeat each exercise 5-10 times. Do this 6 times a day**

## Do not

- Continue these exercises if they cause dizziness
- Circle your head and neck
- Slouch

**Pain relief can be provided in two ways:** simple pain relief tablets such as Paracetamol or Co-Codamol and or non-steroid anti-inflammatory tablets such as Ibuprofen.

All these medicines are available without prescription. It is cheaper to buy them without prescription.

People with asthma, peptic ulcers or kidney disease should not take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines. You may have been expecting to be issued with a neck collar. Recent research has shown that these are of no benefit in traumatic neck sprain and may prolong the time it takes for your injury to get better.

If you are not getting better in a week and we have not arranged to see you again, please arrange an appointment with your GP.

Alternatively, if there is an unexpected worsening of your condition, please telephone the Emergency Department for advice.

## Correct sitting position

- Sit in a firm chair
- Support the natural hollow in the lower part of your back with a small firm cushion or rolled up towel
- Keep your shoulders back

## Correct sleeping position to help neck pain

Always sleep on a firm bed either on your back or on your side, never sleep on your face. If you sleep on your side there are two points that are important

- Your head should remain in line with your spine. Use a rolled up towel placed inside your pillowcase to form a ridge to support your neck
- The arm on which you are lying must be kept in front of your chest, not under it or behind it

Should you have any worries or concerns please contact:

Your ..... team is based at .....

Telephone: .....

## Confidentiality

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We promise to use your information fairly and legally, and in-line with local and national policies. You have a right to understand how your information is used and you can request a copy of the information we hold about you at any time.

For further information contact the Information Governance Team on 01228 608998 or email [Information.Governance@cumbria.nhs.uk](mailto:Information.Governance@cumbria.nhs.uk)

## Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback, which helps us to improve our services. If you have any comments, compliments or complaints to make about your care, please contact the Patient Experience Team. Email: [PET@cumbria.nhs.uk](mailto:PET@cumbria.nhs.uk) Tel: 01228 602128 Freephone: 0800 633 5547

If you would like this factsheet in another language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio, please call: **01228 603890**

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