Patient Information

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust

Emergency Department

Neck Injury

Injuries and neck pain can occur from road traffic accidents (commonly called whiplash), playing sports and also sudden movement. Pain develops in the neck muscles, sometimes immediately, but commonly a few hours later. The pain usually gets worse over the first 24-48 hours then gradually gets better although this may take some time.

An X-ray is not always necessary for the assessment of your injury. Take the recommended painkillers regularly to help with the pain and to allow movement and exercise to combat stiffness.

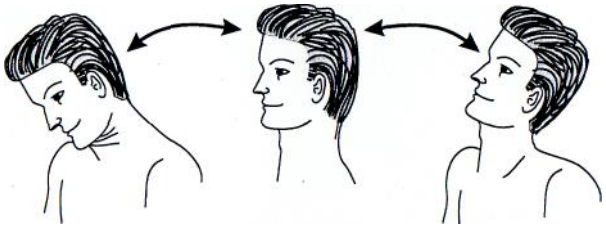
Do not drive until you can fully turn your head.

The facts about whiplash:

- Permanent damage is rare and the long term outlook is very good.
- Some people worry that their pain did not develop until a day or two after the accident, when in fact this is a good sign demonstrating minimal damage has occurred.
- Symptoms can also include headaches, arm or jaw pain, dizziness and even low back pain. These are quite common with this type of injury and should resolve along with the neck pain. During the early stages, the pain usually improves within days or a few weeks. Should the pain continue this is not necessarily an indication of anything serious.
- People who cope better with whiplash are those who stay active, exercise their neck, and get on with life despite the pain.
- Resting for more than two days and not moving your neck can result in symptoms lasting longer.

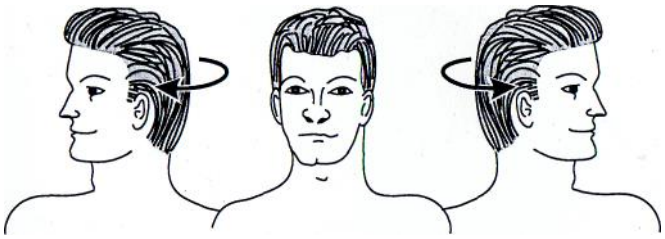
Carry out the following exercises to prevent the pain and stiffness becoming worse. They may cause some discomfort but this is not harmful. Taking your painkillers regularly will help. The exercises should be done at least four to five times per day.

Bend your head backwards as far as feels comfortable. Hold for approximately six seconds. **Repeat 10 times,** as often as can be tolerated.

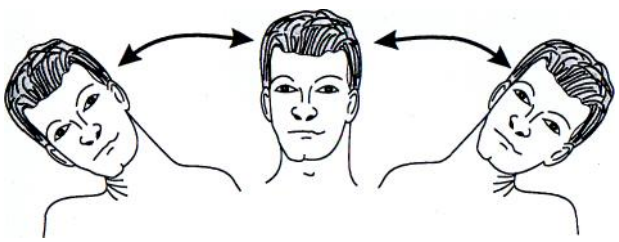


Bend your head forwards as far as you can until you feel a stretch along the back of your neck. Hold for approximately six seconds. **Repeat 10 times**, as often as can be tolerated.

Turn your head to both sides until you feel a stretch along your neck muscles. Hold for approximately six seconds. **Repeat 10 times**, as often as can be tolerated.



Tilt your head to both sides until you feel a stretch along your neck muscles. Hold for approximately six seconds. **Repeat 10 times**, as often as can be tolerated



To maintain good posture - sit on a chair with your back to a wall and gently tuck your chin down and at the same time slide the back of your head up the wall. Perform these for five seconds taking care not to overstrain. **Repeat 10 times.**

For further information and advice contact your GP.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6200 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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