

# NECK PAIN

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Please note: these comments are general and may not all apply to you. The neck is a complex structure and requires specialist care.

- 40 % of the population gets moderate to severe neck pain at some stage of their life.
- Blaming others for your pain e.g. accident / injury does not help.
- You are the person who is responsible for getting better.
- Less than 5% of people with severe neck pain need surgery.
- Many patients neck pain causes headaches including "migraine".

Work as much as possible within pain limits, take a stretching break whenever you need. Pillows and collars may help ease pain. Heat (hot packs and hot water) will help reduce spasm.



**Physiotherapy** – see the therapist that I recommend. The neck is a difficult region to treat and not all therapists are experienced in that particular area.

**Medication** - anti-inflammatory, painkillers, anti-spasm and sleeping medication may also be helpful especially to 'break the pain cycle'.



**Exercises** - the best general exercises I find are ones such as swimming (may need a snorkel) and running/walking in the water. Other good exercises are regular walks, yoga and bike riding.

The physiotherapist and I will give specific rehabilitation exercises to you. Do these at least once a day, every day. Many people find they have less pain after completing exercises. When the therapist mobilizes your neck and you do some exercises there may be a temporary increase in pain. Discuss this with the therapist and myself.

**Rehabilitation exercises** fall into 3 broad types;

1. Stretching exercises to increase and maintain flexibility
2. Strengthening exercises to build up muscle power
3. Control exercises to help your posture and coordination

If all the above treatments fail, do not despair, there are other treatments that may be helpful including injected cortisone, new medications such as botox and facet joint blocks. Surgery is rare!