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The Top 5 Ways to Relieve Your Neck Pain Now

Burning. Aching. Tension. Tightness. Pain. Stiffness.

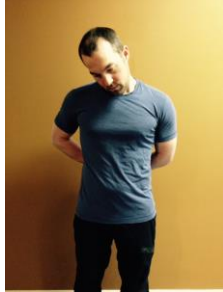
Does any of this ring a bell? If you are using these words to describe how your neck and shoulders feel, then you need to pay close attention.

The symptoms listed above are signals that your body is sending out as a cry for help! In the past 11 years, we have seen hundreds of people with neck and shoulder pain and tension. From that experience, we have gathered the following tools and tips that you can start using right now to help relieve the aching, stiff, tense muscles in your neck and shoulders.

1. Stretching

If you already have neck pain, then there is probably a good chance that you haven't been stretching regularly. When muscle tension in the neck is abnormally high, range of motion in the spinal joints can become decreased. Stretching helps to stimulate tiny cells called mechanoreceptors which send healthy feedback to the brain and result in you feeling less pain. Muscle knots or trigger points result from sustained muscle contraction, which decreases the flow of oxygen and blood to the muscle. Stretching increases this circulation of blood and oxygen. These are some of the reasons why you feel better after stretching. Here are our 3 favorite stretches for the neck and shoulders (upper trapezius muscle):

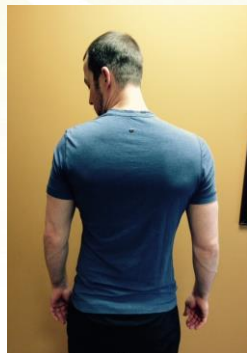
- **Standing:** Place your left arm behind your back and grab onto that wrist with your right hand. Tilt your head away from your left shoulder by aiming your right ear slightly in front of your right shoulder. Hold for 15-30 seconds. Repeat on the other side.



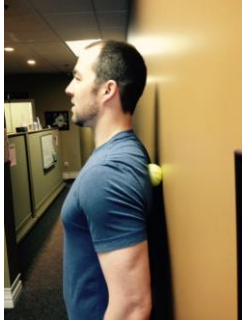
- **Seated:** Reach behind your back with your right hand. Reach above and over your head with your left arm so that your left hand is over your right ear. Use your left hand to gently stretch your head toward your left shoulder. Hold for 15-30 seconds. Repeat on the other side.



- **Hands free:** Turn your head as far to one side as you comfortably can (don't over-rotate). Tip your chin down towards your shoulder until you feel a gentle stretch on the opposite side of your neck. Hold 15-30 seconds. Do the other side.



2. **Lacrosse ball or foam roller**– You can roll out those tight upper back muscles using a foam roller. We really like the lacrosse ball method. Place a lacrosse ball (or tennis ball, but that may be too soft) in the space between your spine and your shoulder blade and gently slide your body up and down over the ball to work on those muscular trigger points that could be causing neck pain and tension.



3. **Heat** – use only after the first 48 hours of an episode of acute pain. Apply heat for 15-20 minutes at a time to those tight muscles. Alternatively, generate your own internal heat by going for a brisk walk and get those muscles moving!
4. **Proper ergonomics** – This applies for work, home, in the car, reading in bed at night, watching television, using the right pillow, and much more.
5. **Get moving!** Put the cell phone or tablet down. Commit to a 15- or 30-minute walk every day. Your body is designed to move! The more hunched you are while texting and using a tablet or computer, the stiffer and more tense your body will become. Take a break from your computer at least twice per hour and do the stretches shown above. Make sure to drink lots of water too!

A Note on Posture

Poor posture is responsible for a lot of chronic neck and shoulder problems. The proper spinal curves are essential for normal muscle tone and range of motion. Here's a quick test you can perform to see if you have forward head posture (FHP) that could be the root cause of your neck pain and tension:

Stand up and have a friend or family member stand looking at your body from the side. They should see your ear lining up directly with your shoulder. If your head is protruded forward, your ear will be in front of the shoulder. Another way to test this is to stand naturally with your back against a wall. Does the back of your head touch or come very close to touching the wall? Or is there is moderate to large gap between the wall and the back of your head? If there is, then you most likely have forward head posture, and possibly a loss of the normal neck curve.

Forward head posture needs to be properly assessed by a qualified Doctor of Chiropractic. We have been trained in spinal reconstruction and have years of experience correcting forward head posture through spinal adjustments and rehabilitation exercises.

Well there you have it – some of the easiest and best ways to naturally address your neck and shoulder tension. Thank you for reading this guide, and we hope you find it valuable. We love hearing from you with suggestions on what you would like to see in our next guide!

