

# Exercises for Maintaining a Healthy Neck

The spinal column is a complicated part of the anatomy which is made up of bones, called vertebrae that are stacked on top of each other with discs in between that act as shock absorbers, and muscles alongside the column which help to maintain the alignment. The individual components of this column must be properly aligned and in tune in order to allow movement without pain. However, bad posture, improper movement and lifting habits, and lack of proper exercise over the years can lead to an unhealthy spine which can lead to chronic neck pain. The following exercises will allow you to maintain a healthy back, and decrease the chances of lost work, freedom, and money from neck pain.

## Exercises While Lying Flat

- ❖ Lie flat on your back while looking straight up at the ceiling, rest your hands on your abdomen, and bend your knees. Without pushing your neck into your chest, press your neck on the floor gently while pulling your head upward (lengthening your neck). Hold for several seconds and then relax. Repeat 3-5 times.
- ❖ Lie flat on your back while looking straight up at the ceiling, rest your hands on your abdomen, and bend your knees. Use your hands to push your head to one side until you feel a gentle stretch. Hold for several seconds and then switch sides. Repeat 5-10 times.
- ❖ Lie flat on your back while looking straight up at the ceiling, rest your hands on your abdomen, and bend your knees. Turn your head to one side until you feel a gentle stretch. Hold for several seconds and then switch sides. Repeat 5-10 times.
- ❖ Lie flat on your back while looking straight up at the ceiling, rest your arms on the floor by your side, and straighten out your knees. Raise one arm straight overhead and lay it by your head. Hold for several seconds and then return your arm to its starting position and switch sides. Repeat 5-10 times.

## Exercises While on Your Hands and Knees

- ❖ Position yourself on your hands and knees on a soft surface. Align your hips over your knees and place your hands under your shoulders. While keeping your back straight, move your chin toward your chest as far as you can. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax. Repeat 3-5 times.
- ❖ Position yourself on your hands and knees on a soft surface. Align your hips over your knees and place your hands under your shoulders. Tighten your abdominal muscles and raise one arm straight in front of you, up to the level of your head. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax. Repeat with the other arm. Repeat each set 3-5 times.
- ❖ Position yourself on your hands and knees on a soft surface. Align your hips over your knees and place your hands under your shoulders. Tighten your abdominal muscles and raise one arm straight to your side, up to the level of your hip. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax. Repeat with the other arm. Repeat each set 3-5 times.

## Exercises While Sitting

- ❖ Sit all the way back in a chair with your feet flat on the floor, your back straight, and looking straight forward. Lean over to one side, shift your weight onto that hip, and turn your head to the opposite side. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax. Repeat with the other side. Repeat each set 3-5 times.

- ❖ Sit all the way back in a chair with your feet flat on the floor, and your left arm behind your back (between your back and the seat). Pull your head down using your right hand until you feel a gentle stretch in the back of your neck. Hold for 20 seconds and then relax. Repeat with the other side. Repeat each set 3-5 times.
- ❖ Sit all the way back in a chair with your feet flat on the floor, and your left arm behind your back (between your back and the seat). Pull your head to the right down using your right hand until you feel a gentle stretch on the left side of your neck. Hold for 20 seconds and then relax. Repeat with the other side, pulling your head to the left. Repeat each set 3-5 times.
- ❖ Sit all the way back in a chair with your feet flat on the floor, your back straight, and looking straight forward. Bring your left elbow in front of your face using your right hand until you feel a gentle stretch in your shoulder. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax. Repeat with the other side. Repeat each set 3-5 times.
- ❖ Sit all the way back in a chair with your feet flat on the floor, your back straight, and looking straight forward. Raise your arms with your elbows bent until your upper arms are parallel to the floor (at the level of your shoulders). Face your palms forward and squeeze your shoulder blades together. Hold for 10 seconds and then relax. Repeat 3-5 times.
- ❖ Sit all the way back in a chair with your feet flat on the floor, your back straight, and looking straight forward. Place your palm against the middle of your forehead and gently resist against your hand with your neck muscles. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax. Repeat 3-5 times.
- ❖ Sit all the way back in a chair with your feet flat on the floor, your back straight, and looking straight forward. Place your right palm against the right side of your head and gently resist against your hand with your neck muscles. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax. Repeat with the other side. Repeat each set 3-5 times.

### **Exercises While Standing**

- ❖ Stand straight with your back and neck straight, arms at your sides, and looking straight forward. Rotate one shoulder clockwise 20 times and then relax. Rotate the same shoulder counter-clockwise 20 times and then relax. Repeat with the other side. Repeat each set 5-10 times.
- ❖ Stand straight with your back and neck straight, arms at your sides, and looking straight forward. Raise both arms straight overhead and then gently reach backwards. Hold for 15 seconds and then relax. Repeat 5-10 times.

**Nouzhan Sehati, MD**  
 13320 Riverside Drive, Suite 208  
 Sherman Oaks, CA 91423  
 Phone: (818) 783-4949  
 Fax: (818) 783-7537  
[www.sehati.org](http://www.sehati.org)