

PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF NECK PAIN

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Most adults can expect to experience some neck pain in their lifetime. The **cause** of neck pain is often multi-factorial, meaning that there is usually no single cause. Once an episode of neck pain happens, some individuals will find it is a persistent or recurrent condition. However, there are management strategies that can be employed to minimize the negative impact of neck pain.



Below are some tips on prevention and management of neck pain.

- **Protect your neck while you sleep by choosing a pillow** that will help support the head, neck, and shoulders. This will keep them in alignment and minimize stress and strain.
- **Be smart when working at a workstation/desk.** The workstation/desk should be at elbow height. Use of an adjustable chair can help meet this need. Computer monitors should be at eye level for easy viewing. Do not cradle the phone between your head and shoulder. Use of a headset or the speakerphone feature will keep your hands free and allow you to multi-task in a safe manner. Be sure to take regular breaks every 20 to 40 minutes that allow you to stand, walk around, and stretch your neck and upper back.
- **Avoiding cigarette smoke can be helpful.** The reduced blood circulation found in smokers deprives spinal discs of vital nutrients which can lead to premature degeneration. Smoking may also provoke disc herniation with coughing, and cause general damage to the musculoskeletal system through direct chemical irritation and chronic inflammation. Exposure to secondhand smoke during childhood may also increase the risk of developing neck problems later in life.
- **Drinking water** brings vital nutrients to neck muscles and decreases the risk of cramps and strains. Water also helps to protect neck joints by providing lubrication and cushioning.
- **Eliminate poor posture which can strain the muscles and joints in the neck.** While sitting, make sure that your weight is evenly distributed on your seat, your shoulders are not rounding forward, and you are not slouching. Your head should be resting on your torso and not poking forward.
- **Engaging in regular physical activity and exercise will help keep your neck strong.** This can include general cardiovascular conditioning, along with postural, stretching and strengthening exercises for the neck and upper back.
- **Get professional help for your neck pain.** The following treatments have been identified as being helpful for most cases of neck pain: *education, exercise, mobilization, manipulation, acupuncture, and soft tissue therapy*. The scientific literature does not identify any “best” treatment that is effective for everyone. ***Trying a variety of therapies or combination of therapies may be required*** to find relief and help manage neck pain.



If you are having difficulty managing neck pain symptoms, contact a qualified health professional who can prescribe appropriate therapy, rehabilitation and self-management strategies specifically for your circumstance. For more information, visit www.nhwc.ca.

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