

Neck Care Secrets-101 Larry M. Bridge, DC

Neck problems are often mechanical or biomechanical. Neck problems rarely require surgery. What you do can make a big difference. The human body is like a car. The motor (organs) requires motor specialist (M.D.s) and the frame (skeleton, joints and muscles) require frame specialist (Chiropractors).

Continuing with an automobile frame\human body analogy, this article focuses on the front end of the body, or the neck and head. The simple exercises described here can decrease neck pain, increase range of motion, decrease headaches and improve posture. In addition, they will help with immobilization degeneration of the spine. This is a type of rapidly developing arthritis due to lack of spinal joint movement. The neck is the second most common problem area treated in a chiropractic office with the first being the low back. Front end alignment, namely head and neck posture are critical to a healthy cervical spine and its supporting anatomy. Ideally, the head (weighing about 13lb= bowling ball) should be centered over the shoulders for optimum health. Loss of normal head positioning or front end alignment causes numerous documented problems such as headaches, neck or midback pain, soreness or stiffness, arm pain and shoulder pain.

With aging and an industrialized lifestyle we begin to develop a “forward head posture” (ears are no longer centered over the shoulders). This begins a series of biomechanical changes. These changes often lead to neck pain, myofascial pain, disc, joint, nerve problems and visually poor posture. These changes lead to reduced mobility in the neck – which also can lead to balance, coordination and vertigo problems. The neck is loaded with movement and balance (proprioception) nerves requiring normal head-neck movement to work properly.

The following exercises increase movement in the neck.

Range of motion exercises



Exercise 1.

Tilt head forward and backward as far as possible



Exercise 2.

Tilt head toward shoulder keeping shoulder stationary



Exercise 3.

Turn head from side to side as far as possible



Exercise 4.

Do both sides, hold for approximately 15 seconds



Exercise 5.

Do exercise #1-3, 5 to 10 times in each direction, with gentle stretching. They should not cause pain. Gradually increase all head and neck movements. Do 3-5 times per day.

Exercise #4 and 5 should be held for 15 seconds in each direction. Do these two exercises several times per day, including once in the shower with warm water.

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Other front-end tips

If you awake with pain on a regular basis, change pillows – the best pillows are called contour pillows. They support the normal neck structures. Increase your water intake to 60-80 ounces per day. Make sure you use good computer desk ergonomics. Remember to stand up straight-our mothers were right. If your problems persist, see a Doctor of Chiropractic, he/she can help get the frame back in alignment.

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