



National University  
Hospital



how to  
**take care**  
of your  
**neck**

Department of Orthopaedic Surgery

# how to take care of your neck

Most neck pain cases are not due to any serious diseases. Although some can last for a while, they may not be serious. Most people can get going quite quickly, even when they still experience some pain.

Your neck is designed for movement. The earlier you get it moving and resume your daily activities, the sooner you will feel better. Resting for more than a day or two usually does not help as it may prolong the pain and even cause disability in some cases.

The people who cope best with neck pain are those who stay active and get on with life despite the pain. The most important thing is to get moving as soon as possible.

## rest or stay active?

**Bed rest for more than two days** is **not** recommended because the pain will be prolonged and may result in the following:

- Your neck gets stiff
- Your muscles get weak
- Your bones get weak
- You lose physical fitness
- You get depressed
- The pain may worsen
- It will be more difficult to get going again

**Regular physical activity** is encouraged as it:

- Develops your muscles
- Keeps you supple
- Gives you stronger bones
- Makes you fit
- Makes you feel good
- Releases natural chemicals that reduce the pain

Exercise helps your neck by stretching tight muscles and joints. Find what works best for your neck. Your goal is to get moving and steadily increase your level of activity.



# Simple neck & shoulder exercises that you can do

## 1. Chin tucks

Pull your chin in while keep your neck and back straight. Hold for 5 seconds.



## 2. Upper traps stretch

Tilt your head towards one shoulder, until you feel a stretch on the opposite side. Use your hand to hold the stretch for 20 seconds. Repeat for the other side.

## 3. Levator scap stretch

Turn your head 45 degrees to one side and look down. Gently pull down your head and feel the stretch at the back of your neck. Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat for the other side.



## 4. Shoulder rolls

Move your shoulders up, back then down.

## 5. Lower traps activation

Raise your arms to form the letter "Y". Move both shoulder blades down and towards the center. Hold for 5 seconds.



## 6. Scapula retract in neutral position

Position your hands by the sides. Squeeze both shoulder blades together. Hold for 5 seconds.

## 7. Shoulder retract with hands behind head

Place your hands behind your head. Tuck in your chin gently. Draw both shoulder blades towards the center and down towards the floor. Hold for 5 seconds.



\*If you feel any pain or physical discomfort while performing the exercises, stop immediately. Consult your physiotherapist or doctor if it persists.

Please scan QR code for the neck exercises videos.



English



Chinese



Malay

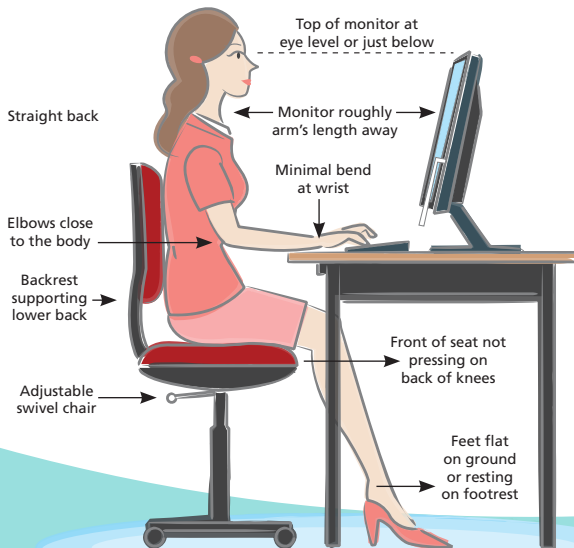
# ergonomics (sitting task)

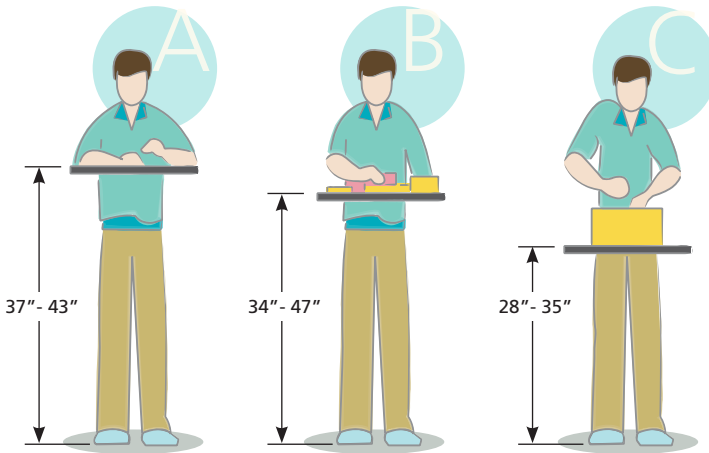
## Workstation

- Place the monitor directly in front of you while at the keyboard.
- Position the top of the monitor screen at or below eye level.
- Tilt or swivel the monitor screen to eliminate reflections on the screen.
- Use a task light to illuminate documents properly.
- Use a document holder to place source documents for copy-typing purposes.
- Place the mouse and other input devices next to keyboard.
- Allow place for knees and feet to move freely under the workstation.

## Chair

- Use the backrest of the chair to provide full support particularly for the lower back.
- Adjust the height of the chair to keep forearms, wrists and hands in a straight line when using the keyboard.
- Ensure the chair allows you to obtain a 90° or greater angle at the hips and knees.
- Use a footrest if needed to ensure feet are rested on the ground.
- Don't stay seated for long – stand up and stretch regularly after approximately 45 minutes.
- Apply the 20-20-20 rule to relieve tension in the neck and shoulder muscles. For every 20 minutes of computer usage, stretch or walk around for 20 seconds and look at least 6m away.





Different tasks require different work surfaces  
*National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (USA)*

## ergonomics (standing task)

### Workstation

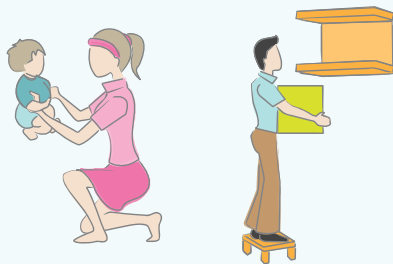
- Working tables and benches should be adjustable. If the workstation cannot be adjusted, platforms to raise the shorter worker or pedestals on top of workstations for the taller worker should be considered.
- There should be enough room to move around and to change body position.
- Providing built-in foot rails or portable footrests allows the worker to shift body weight from one leg to the other.
- Elbow support for precision work help reduce tension in the upper arms and neck.
- Controls and tools should be positioned such that the worker can reach them easily and without twisting and bending.
- Where it is possible, a seat should be provided so that the worker can do the job either sitting or standing. Seats at the workplace expand the variety of possible body positions and give the worker more flexibility.

### Different tasks require different work surface heights:

- A** Precision work, such as writing or electronic assembly - 5 cm above elbow height. Elbow support is needed for precision work.
- B** Light work, such as assembly-line or mechanical jobs - about 5-10 cm below elbow height.
- C** Heavy work, demanding downward forces - from 20-40 cm below elbow height.

**Lifting**

- Bend your knees, not your back.
- Keep your spine as straight as possible.
- Hold objects close to your body.
- Lift objects to only chest height.
- Lift with the help of your leg muscles.
- Get help with heavy loads.

**Standing / Walking**

- Stand with one foot propped up; change positions often.
- Stand upright with head up and back straight.
- Walk with good posture, chin tucked in, head held high and toes pointing forward.
- Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes.

**Driving**

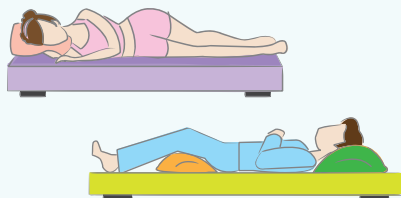
- Adjust your car seat so that knees are at or just below hip level.
- Sit upright and drive with both hands comfortably on the wheel.
- Ensure good support to your lower back; use a rolled-up towel or lumbar support.

**Sitting**

- Sit with both feet flat on the floor.
- Keep knees at or slightly below hip level.
- Sit upright against the backrest.
- Support your lower back with a rolled-up towel or lumbar support.
- Change your sitting posture regularly.

**Sleeping**

- Sleep on a bed with a firm base or mattress.
- When sleeping on your side, place a pillow between your bent knees.
- Place a pillow under your knees when you sleep on your back.
- Choose a pillow that support your shoulders, upper back and neck.





## Lifting

- Don't bend forward.
- Don't twist your body while lifting heavy objects.
- Don't lift heavy objects above shoulder level.
- Don't carry heavy loads at arm's length.

These movements may cause injury.



## Standing / Walking

- Don't stand in one position for too long.
- Don't bend forward while your legs are straight.
- Don't slouch when standing or walking.
- Don't text or look down at your mobile phone for long periods.



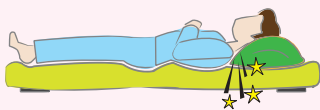
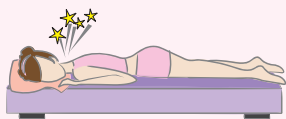
## Driving

- Don't sit too far back from the steering wheel. Stretching for the pedals and steering wheel causes a strain on your back and neck.
- Don't stress your neck when driving, adjust your seat and practise a good driving posture.



## Sitting

- Don't slump.
- Don't sit in a chair that's too high or too far from your desk.
- Avoid leaning forward.
- Avoid arching or rounding your shoulder and back.
- Avoid sitting in one position for too long.



## Sleeping

- Don't sleep or lounge on soft mattresses or cushions without support.
- Don't sleep in an awkward position that strains your neck.

# locate us



# contact us

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Saturdays / Sundays / Public Holidays: Closed

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Information is correct at time of printing (Mar/2022) and subject to revision without prior notice.