

## EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT AND MINOR INJURY UNITS

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## NECK SPRAIN

### NECK INJURIES

Minor sprains in the neck are common injuries, especially after a road traffic accident. The pain may not appear until some time after the accident and is often much worse the following morning when you wake-up. This is because spasm develops in the muscles. In the majority of cases, **neck X-rays are NOT required** - even if there is significant pain.

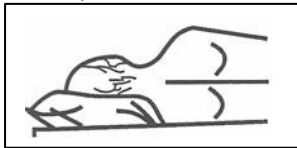
### TREATMENT

Pain-killers should be taken on a regular basis rather than waiting until you are very sore. Heat or ice can be used to relieve the pain. Use either a hot water bottle or bag of frozen peas covered in a towel and hold this against your neck for 10-15 minutes. It is important that you follow the advice on this card about sleeping and that you do the recommended exercises to relieve the muscle spasm.

**If you develop tingling or weakness in your arms, you should contact NHS 24 on 111.**

### Sleeping with your neck sprain

Avoid using too many pillows - use a max of two. Try to keep your head and neck in a straight line with the rest of your spine. Lie on your back or side - avoid lying on your front. A rolled-up towel placed inside the pillow cover can help to support your neck. Always roll onto your side and tuck your chin in, before moving your head off the pillow.



CORRECT: Head straight in line  
firm bed pillow too thick



WRONG: Head pushed up, with back,

A neck collar is not used because it makes the spasm worse and means the sprain takes longer to heal

### NECK EXERCISES

The following exercises will help to relieve the spasm in your neck. They should be performed in a sitting position. Repeat each exercise x10, around 3-4 x/day.

**These exercises may be uncomfortable - THIS IS NORMAL**

#### HEAD RETRACTION

Sit with your back straight. Pull your chin in keeping your neck and back straight. Hold this position until you feel the stretch. Repeat ten times



#### HEAD EXTENSION / FLEXION

Sit as before with your chin pulled in. Bend your head backwards until you feel a stretch. Hold and count to three then relax. Now bend forwards until you feel a stretch and hold again and count to three. Relax and repeat ten times



#### HEAD ROTATION

Sit with your back straight. Turn your head to one side until you feel a stretch. Hold and count to three. Turn your head to the other side and hold again. Relax and repeat ten times



#### HEAD TILT

Tilt your head towards one shoulder until you feel the stretch on the opposite side. Hold for 3 seconds then repeat to the other side. Repeat ten times



### Physiotherapy

If your pain is affecting your activity and persisting, you can ask your GP to refer you to a physiotherapist, or you can refer yourself directly.

You can **self refer** to physiotherapy if your symptoms persist beyond 2 weeks of your A&E attendance

You can apply online using the link below or print a form, complete it and hand it in to your local physiotherapy department. [www.nhs.uk/scot/hospitals-services/services-a-to-z/musculoskeletal-msk-physiotherapy/msk-form/](http://www.nhs.uk/scot/hospitals-services/services-a-to-z/musculoskeletal-msk-physiotherapy/msk-form/)

Exercises and advice can be found online at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints/>

