

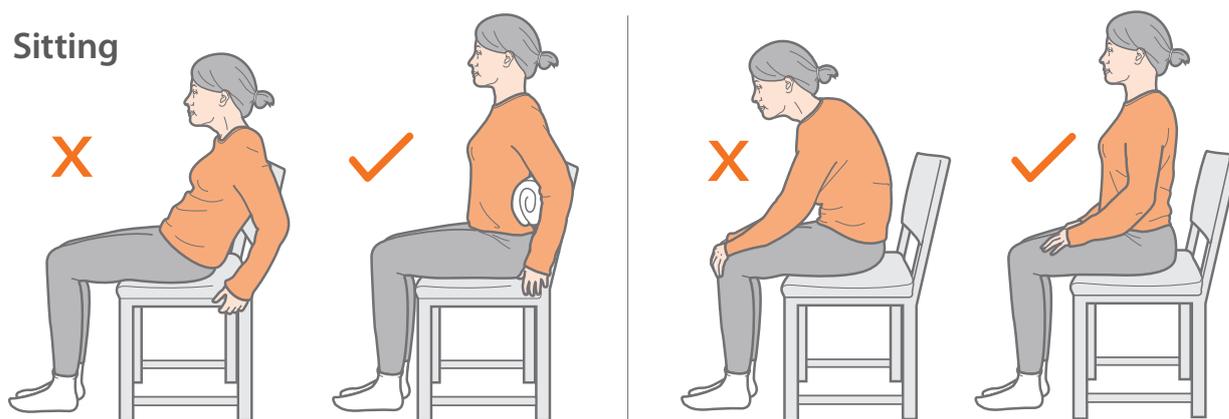
Neck pain

Reports on the Rheumatic Diseases | Series 6 | **Spring 2011** | Hands On No 8

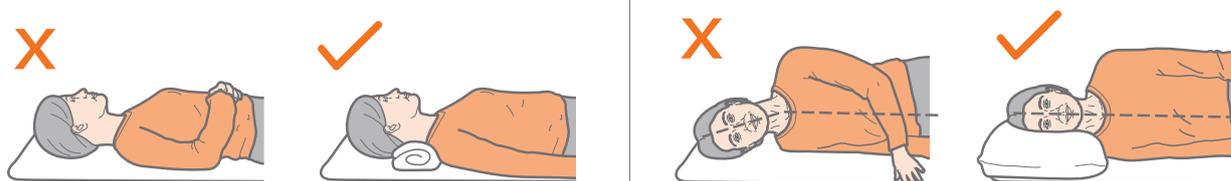
Posture

Posture is important when experiencing neck pain. Here are some examples of good and bad sitting and lying postures.

Sitting



Lying



Exercises

The exercises overleaf should be started gently and increased gradually, and you should not try to push hard to get rid of pain. A little discomfort is common when starting a new activity or exercise, especially if you have not been active for some time, as your joints and muscles get used to working again. Try each exercise in turn and find out how many times you can repeat it without feeling extra discomfort for the following day. If you are not sure, try each one 5–10 times to start with. As your neck gets used to the new exercise, you should gradually increase the number of times you do the exercise. You may find a particular exercise eases your pain. If so, you should do more of this exercise and use it as a 'first aid'.

Some aches or discomfort with exercise are normal and should be expected. However if an exercise makes your symptoms significantly worse, or you experience other symptoms such as dizziness, seek advice before continuing.

Sometimes you may experience a 'flare up' or marked increase in pain. This can happen whether you exercise or not. For a couple of days you may be happier reducing the amount you exercise, but try not to stop completely. As the pain eases, try and build back up to the previous level as soon as you can.

(continued overleaf)

Exercises *(continued)*

1. Flexion/extension

Flexion: Sitting upright in a good posture, bend your head forwards gently pulling your chin closer to your chest. Hold for a count of 5 then relax.

Extension: Sitting upright in a good posture, take your head slowly back until you are looking at the ceiling. Hold for a count of 5 then relax.



2. Rotation

Sitting upright in a good posture, turn your head to one side until you feel a stretch. Hold for a count of 5 then relax. Repeat to the other side.



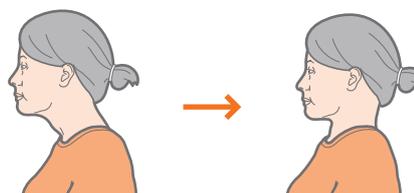
3. Side flexion

Sitting upright in a good posture, keep your head facing forward then tilt your head towards one shoulder, without shrugging your shoulder, until you feel the stretch on the opposite side. Hold for a count of 5 then relax. Repeat on the other side.



4. Retraction

Sitting upright in a good posture, pull your chin in (not tipping your head forwards). Hold at the end position and feel the stretch in your neck. Hold for a count of 5.



This 'Information and exercise sheet' can be downloaded from the Arthritis Research UK website (www.arthritisresearchuk.org/medical-professional-info and follow the links to Hands On Spring 2011 No 8).

Medical Editor: Simon Somerville. Project Editor: Frances Mawer. ISSN 1741-833X. Published by Arthritis Research UK, Copeman House, St Mary's Court, St Mary's Gate, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S41 7TD www.arthritisresearchuk.org. Registered Charity England and Wales no. 207711, Scotland no. SC041156.