

NECK INJURY

Injury to the neck is common after a road traffic accident or sporting injury. It is an injury to the ligaments and muscles in your neck.

Fortunately, serious or permanent damage is rare.

This may cause pain to develop in your neck, maybe either immediately or after a few hours. This usually gets worse over the first 24-36 hours then gradually gets better, although full recovery may take some time. The acute pain usually improves within days or a few weeks, at least enough to get on with your life. Simple painkillers in the form of paracetamol/ ibuprofen, taken regularly, ease the pain.

What you do in the early stages is very important.

Your neck is designed for movement. The sooner you get your neck moving and doing ordinary activities as normally as possible, the quicker you will feel better.

The people who cope best with neck sprain injuries are those who stay active, exercise their neck and get on with life, despite the pain. An X-ray is not always essential.

It is no longer standard practice to give collars for neck injuries, as they can cause the symptoms to be more prolonged if not used properly.

Rest for more than a day or two usually does not help and may actually prolong pain and disability.

A rolled-up towel placed under the back of the neck at night when lying flat helps to relieve the discomfort.

In general terms, you should progressively stretch your neck in all directions.

Exercise 6 times in each direction every couple of hours or so. You should move to the point of pain, and then gradually try to go a little bit further each session.

It also helps to exercise your shoulders.

- Gently push your head down into the pillow
- Slowly turn your head to look to the left and then to the right. Use your hand to guide the movement if this feels more comfortable
- Take your left ear down towards your left shoulder, again using your hand to help if easier. Repeat to the other side

- Bend your head forwards and try to touch the front of your chest with your chin. Then move your head backwards

Progress these exercises by performing them sitting well supported in a chair.

If the exercises cause any dizziness, then discontinue for the day and start the exercises the follow day.

Take painkillers such as paracetamol/ ibuprofen regularly to relieve the discomfort. They are most effective when taken regularly.

Correct sleeping posture to avoid neck pain

- Always try to sleep on a firm bed, on your back or on your side. Never sleep face down.
- *If you sleep on your side, there are two points that are important:*
 - **See that the head and neck are straight, i.e., in line with the rest. The number of pillows may be 1 or 2 or more depending on their thickness and firmness. Use the right number to keep the head and neck straight on the trunk**
 - **The arm on which you are lying must be kept in front of the chest, not under it or behind.**

Shoulder stretching

- Shrug your shoulders while breathing in and then relax while breathing out
- Try rolling them at the same time circle your arms, one at a time backwards on forwards like swimming crawl and backstrokes. Repeat about 10 times in each direction every couple of hours or so.

Correct sitting posture

When sitting/ watching TV, sit in an upright chair with a rolled-up towel in the small of your back. Look straight ahead.

Please attend the nearest Emergency Department if you develop numbness, tingling or weakness in your limbs.

You should see your own family doctor or return to the Emergency Department if you are still having significant problems in 2 weeks' time.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.

For additional medical advice, if your symptoms or condition worsens:

Contact your GP

NHS 111:

Get help with your symptoms, NHS111:

Information to help you manage your health:

Telephone 111

<https://111.nhs.uk/>

www.nhs.uk

In an emergency telephone 999

Emergency Department (A&E)
Alexandra Hospital
Woodrow Drive
Redditch B98 7UB

Tel: 01527 512030

Minor Injury Unit
Kidderminster Hospital
Bewdley Road
Kidderminster DY11 6RJ

Tel: 01562 513039

Emergency Department (A&E)
Worcestershire Royal Hospital
Charles Hastings Way
Worcester WR5 1DD

Tel: 01905 760743