

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR CONDITION: Acute Neck Pain

**NECK PAIN IS A COMMON PROBLEM.** Often, the exact cause for the pain is unclear. In most cases, it is not due to a serious disease or neck problem, and the pain usually improves in 4 to 6 weeks with simple exercises and self-care.

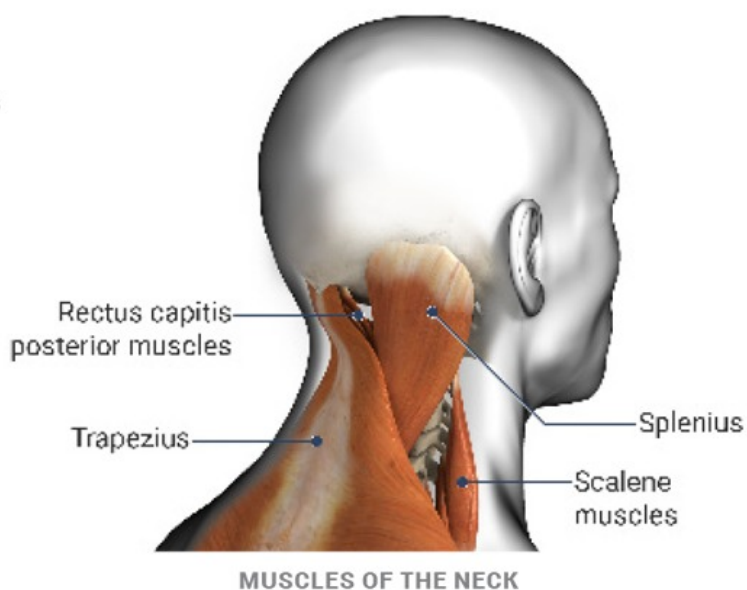
## How Does the Neck Work?

Your head is connected to your neck and upper back by many muscles. Large muscles such as the splenius and the trapezius attach to the base of the skull.

Beneath the splenius and trapezius are smaller muscles called the rectus capitis posterior and scalenes that also help support and move the head.

## What Does Neck Pain Feel Like?

You may feel pain in your neck, shoulders, or the base of your skull. If a nerve in your neck is irritated, you may feel a tingling sensation in your arm or hand. Difficulty moving your neck is common, and moving your neck may worsen the pain.



## What Causes Neck Pain?

Most neck pain results from irritation or injury to one or more of the muscles, joints, or nerves of the neck. This irritation is most commonly caused by:



**POOR SITTING POSTURE**

- Poor sitting posture while sitting at your desk or computer, or while reading or driving
- Sleeping in an unhealthy position
- Looking up repeatedly while completing tasks
- Changes in neck alignment due to eye wear
- Stressful work or home situations that increase the tension in the neck muscles
- Changes in joints and discs over time due to natural wear and tear

## Managing Your Neck Pain

There are many things you can do at home to improve your neck pain and prevent it from happening again.



### WALKING

Be active every day and make a goal of walking a total of 30 minutes per day. Start with shorter walks several times a day and practice good posture while you walk by standing up straight.



### MEDICATIONS

If your healthcare provider gave you a prescription for pain medication, take it exactly as directed. Contact your healthcare provider if you have any questions.



### MODALITIES

Place a cold pack or heat pack on your neck for 10-15 minutes every 2 to 3 hours to help ease the pain in your neck. Be sure to place the ice in a thin cloth layer before applying it to your skin.



### CHANGE POSITIONS FREQUENTLY

Avoid holding your neck still or keeping it in one position. Set a timer to remind you to take a break and change positions every 30 minutes.



### MAINTAIN GOOD POSTURE

Practice good postural habits in the office, during rest, and in your day to day activities. Healthy posture is one of the best tools you have for improving your long-term health.

- Keep your computer monitor at eye level and use a chair with back support.
- Avoid tilting your head to hold a phone between your ear and shoulder. When texting, try to keep your phone screen at eye level to avoid bending your neck.
- While sleeping on your back, support the curve of your neck by placing a small towel roll inside the pillow case at its base.



HEALTHY SLEEPING POSITION



HEALTHY DESK POSTURE

## Your Care

Consult with your healthcare provider if you experience an increase in your symptoms with recommended exercises, or if you develop new symptoms of numbness, tingling, or a spread of the pain.