

Further Information

If you require any further information after reading this leaflet, please contact:

Therapies Department
Tel: 01926 608068

As a key provider of healthcare and as an employer, the Trust has a statutory obligation to promote and respect equality and human rights. This is set out in various pieces of legislation including: Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Disability Discrimination Act (2005), Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and the Age Discrimination Act (2006)

Our information for patients can also be made available in other languages, Braille, audio tape, disc or in large print.

PALS

We offer a Patient Advice Liaison Service (PALS). This is a confidential service for families to help with any questions or concerns about local health services.

You can contact the service by the direct telephone line on 01926 600 054 or calling in at the office located at Warwick Hospital.

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Information
Group

South Warwickshire 
NHS Foundation Trust

THERAPIES SERVICE

Rehabilitation Advice following a Whiplash Injury

If you are unable to attend your appointment please telephone 01926 608068 to cancel your appointment

Introduction

What is whiplash?

'Whiplash' is the term used to describe when your head moves quickly forward and then backwards, which commonly happens in road traffic accidents. This quick back and forth movement may cause injury to the neck

People often experience neck discomfort and neck and shoulder stiffness for a few days after an accident. For most people this pain is mild, does not interfere with normal activities and gradually gets better.

Some people have more severe neck pain. They may also experience

- Headaches
- Pain in the shoulders and arms
- Dizziness or altered sensation
- Weakness in the arms

How long will it take for me to get better?

The length of time it takes you to get better will depend on the extent of your injury. Every injury is different. Most people will be able to continue with their normal activities but it may take weeks or even a few months for the discomfort to go away completely. If you have had to reduce your normal activities you should aim to return to them within a few weeks.

It may seem that it is taking a long time for you to recover. If you are worried about this or if your pain gets worse please visit your General Practitioner for further advice.

Neck movement exercises:

Sit in the correct postural position, as in exercise 3 repeat all exercises below 10 times to each side.

5. Rotation

Gently turn your head from one side to the other. Your eyes should follow the direction in which you are turning. Gradually aim to turn your head far enough so your chin is in line with your shoulder.

Rotation



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Side bending



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6. Side bending

Gently tilt your head towards your shoulder and feel the gentle stretch in the muscles on the side of your neck. Perform the movement to both sides.

7. Bending and extending

Gently bend your head towards your chest. Lead the movement with your chin. Moving the chin first, bring your head back to the upright position and gently roll it back to look up towards the ceiling. Leading with your chin, return your head to the upright position.

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Exercises in a sitting position

3. Correct postural position

Correct your posture regularly by gently straightening up your lower back and pelvis. Now gently draw your shoulder blades back and down. Hold the position with ease for at least 10 seconds.

This position will prevent and ease muscle pain and tension in your neck and shoulder muscles. Repeat the correction regularly, every half hour during the day. You can do this exercise at work, in the car, train or bus and sitting at home.

4. Neck isometric (no movement) exercise



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Sit in the correct postural position as described above. Make sure your chin is relaxed and slightly down. Place your right hand on your right cheek. Gently try to turn your head into your fingers to look over your right shoulder but do not allow movement. Hold the contraction for five seconds. Use a 10% to 20% effort, no more!

Repeat with the left hand on the left cheek. Do five repetitions of the holding exercise to each side.

What can I do to help me get better?

Gently exercise your neck. This will restore movement and flexibility and make sure your muscles are working efficiently to support your head and neck. Examples of exercises are shown on the following pages.

Try to stay active. Do as many of your normal activities as possible. Staying active helps you to recover more quickly.

Stay at work if you can. People who stay at work after an accident recover more quickly than those who take time off.

Don't use a collar without advice from your doctor or therapist. Most people don't need to use collars, and using one unnecessarily may slow your recovery.

Initially, avoid heavy lifting. Do not sit for longer than 30 minutes. It is most important to stay generally active but it is wise to prevent excessive strain on your neck in the early stages after injury. For example, stand up from a sitting position at regular intervals or perform some of the gentle exercises while sitting. Divide heavy loads (e.g. grocery shopping) into several lighter loads for carrying.

Relaxing both body and mind will help you manage any pain more easily.

Pain relieving medication such as paracetamol may help. For more severe cases, anti-inflammatories can be prescribed in the short term to reduce pain and swelling. Medication should be taken as advised by a doctor.

General exercise advice

The following exercises should help your neck to heal. Perform all the exercises in a slow and controlled manner.

The exercises are designed to restore the movement and muscle control around your neck and to reduce unnecessary postural strain and muscle pain.

Stop the exercises and contact your doctor or therapist if you notice:

- Dizziness, light headedness, blurred vision, fainting or disorientation
- Sudden pain shooting down your arm, or numbness or weakness in your arm or hand
- Unusually severe neck pain
- The exercises consistently produce a headache.

For each exercise:

- Move smoothly and slowly, without sudden jerks.
- Keep your mouth and jaw relaxed. Keep your lips together, teeth slightly apart and let your tongue rest away from the roof of your mouth.
- Gently hold your shoulders back and down so that they are relaxed while doing all the exercises
- In movement exercises, try to move the same distance to each side. If one side is stiffer, move gently into the stiffness. Move to that direction a little more often.
- Expect some discomfort, but remember exercises should not cause severe pain.

Exercises

Exercises lying down

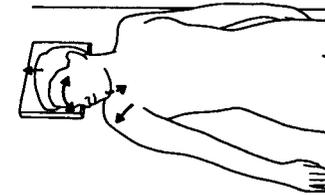
Lie down with a soft pillow under your neck and with your knees bent up.

1. Chin nod exercise

Gently and slowly nod your head forward as if to say 'yes'. Feel the muscles at the front of your neck. Stop the nodding action just before you feel the front muscles hardening. Hold the nod position for five seconds and then relax. Gently move your head back to the normal start position.

Repeat up to 10 times.

2. Head rotation



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Gently turn your head from one side to the other. Your eyes should follow the direction in which you are turning. Gradually aim to turn your head far enough so your chin is in line with your shoulder.

Repeat 10 times to each side.