When the Neck Aches



Have you ever experienced a hard time tilting your head and neck specially after passing a long day leaning into your computer monitor or hunching over your workbench? Neck pain is one of the most common muscle ailments. Relaxing, supporting and stretching out can alleviate the searing pain of your neck, but before that you need to figure out what causes your pain.

Neck pain can result from a variety of causes, including:

- **Muscle strains.** Overuse, such as too many hours hunched over a steering wheel, often triggers muscle strains. Even such minor things as reading in bed or gritting your teeth can strain neck muscles.
- **Worn joints.** Just like all the other joints in your body, your neck joints tend to undergo wear and tear with age, which can cause osteoarthritis in your neck.
- **Nerve compression.** Herniated disks or bone spurs in the vertebrae of your neck can take up too much space and press on the nerves branching out from the spinal cord.
- **Injuries.** Rear-end auto collisions often result in whiplash injuries, which occur when the head is jerked backward and then forward, stretching the soft tissues of the neck beyond their limits.
- **Diseases.** Neck pain can sometimes be caused by diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis, meningitis or cancer.

Easing the pain

Rarely, neck pain can be a symptom of a more serious problem. Remember, it is always recommended to visit your physician if your neck pain persists or becomes worse.

Seek medical care if the neck pain is a result of other body situations, or if it is accompanied by shooting pain down the shoulder and arms (not limited to the neck), numbness, weakness, or loss or sensation in the arms or hands, vomiting and nausea. And give your doctor as many specifics as you can about the location and severity of your pain. Be sure to mention any head or neck movements that make your neck pain better or worse

If you find the neck pain is not that severe, nothing beats taking some self care. There are some simple actions you can try by yourself to give your neck a little bit of relief

- **Try out some over-the-counter pain relievers.** If you want to get rid of temporary neck discomfort, over-the-counter pain relievers can be a solution. But remember to take the pills as directed on the label and make sure you don't overdose for a quick remedy.
- **Alternate heat and cold.** If your neck pain is caused by strained muscles heat can help relax sore muscles. A hot compress on the right spot or taking a hot shower can ease the pain but also remember it sometimes aggravates inflammation, so use it with caution. Or else you can substitute the heat treatment with cold. Applying an ice pack or ice cubes wrapped in a towel for around 20 minutes a few times a day over your sore neck can alleviate the neck ache. Be careful, don't catch cold. Hot and cold therapy can be used as necessary, with 40-minute breaks in between the series.
- **Rest.** Rest is the ultimate medicine for healing any pain and discomforts your body might have. Lie down from time to time during the day to give your neck a rest from holding up your head. Avoid prolonged rest, since too much inactivity can cause increased stiffness in your neck muscles.
- **Gentle stretching and Massaging.** To alleviate your pain, you could move your neck to one side and hold it for 30 seconds. Remember to rotate your head very gently and carefully. Don't stretch your neck much if your pain does not allow. Light massaging can help you feel better as well you could put light pressure on problem area by using your fingertips in a controlled way. stretching or massaging should be avoided if you feel the pain worsen after doing so.
- **Supporting a Stiff Neck.** To ease neck pain, individuals should support the cervical area when sitting or lying down. Using a soft neck collar can aid weakened neck muscles. A special cervical pillow adequately supports the weight of the head and places the neck in its correct posture, to reduce stress on the cervical spine. Patients should lie on their backs or sides, not on their abdomens.

Source- internet