**TAM DUC CLINIC**
**DAN NGOC TRADITIONAL MEDICINE CLINIC**
Operating license: 5995/SYT-GPHĐ

**Focus: Pain and Women's Health**
117/23A Nguyen Huu Canh Street, Thanh My Tay Ward, Ho Chi Minh City
**0345.22.33.19**

PATIENT HANDBOOK

# NECK EXERCISES AT HOME

*Gentle daily exercises for a sore, tired or stiff neck and shoulders*

Your neck holds up a head that weighs about 5 kg all day long. Looking down at your phone, sitting at a computer or driving for a long time keeps the muscles around your neck braced nonstop; over time they get tired, then stiff, then sore. The moves in this handbook are gentle. You can do them right away at home or at work, with no equipment. Exercising regularly every day helps more than an occasional hard session.

## FIVE RULES FOR EXERCISING

1. **Slow and smooth.** Take 3 to 5 seconds for each move. Don't jerk or shake hard.
2. **A light stretch is enough.** Stop where you feel the stretch. If you feel sharp pain or numbness spreading down your arm, stop that move.
3. **Breathe steadily.** Don't hold your breath, even while holding a position.
4. **Sit well.** Use a chair with a backrest: back straight, both feet on the floor, shoulders relaxed.
5. **Be regular.** 2 to 3 times a day, 10 to 15 minutes each time (see the schedule below). It usually takes a few weeks to see clear results.

## ⚠ ASK YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE YOU START IF

- You have recently had a fall, a blow or an accident affecting your head or neck.
- You often feel dizzy, lightheaded or nauseous when you look up or turn your neck.
- You have numbness or weakness in your hands, or a clumsy grip.
- You are unsteady when walking or standing.
- You have had neck spine surgery.
- You have severe osteoporosis.
- You have rheumatoid arthritis or ankylosing spondylitis.
- You are pregnant or have recently given birth, and now have a new, severe headache or neck pain.

### Why this handbook has no neck circles

Many neck exercise charts show the head rolling in one continuous circle, tipping all the way back for the back half. We split that movement into separate directions, and you look up only moderately. The reason: tipping the neck far back and holding it presses on the small joints at the back of the neck, and some people also feel dizzy. Move 4 (the front half circle) keeps the feeling of a "neck roll" but is gentler.

## SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

| Stage | What to do | Each day |
|---|---|---|
| **Week 1 (neck still sore)** | Part A, at the lowest number of repetitions listed for each move | 2–3 times |
| **Weeks 2–3** | Part A, building up to the highest number; add Part B | 2–3 times |
| **From week 4** | All three Parts A, B and C; keep it up as a habit | 2 times |

The doctor may add or remove moves to suit your condition.

*Exercising every day matters more than exercising hard.*

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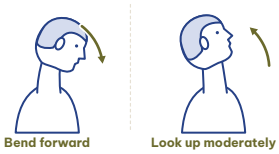
PART A · 6 MOVES

# GENTLE MOVEMENT

Helps your neck move more freely and comfortably. Sit up straight, shoulders relaxed.

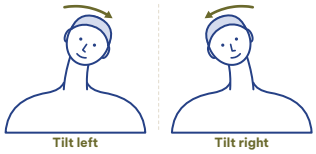



## 1 Bend forward and look up

- Slowly bend your head forward, chin toward your chest. Hold 3 seconds.
- Look up, with your eyes on the spot where the ceiling meets the wall. Hold 3 seconds. Don't tip your head all the way back.

**Repetitions:** 5–10 times.

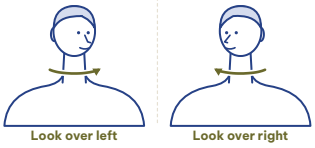
*Note: If you get dizzy easily, look up only until your eyes look straight ahead.*




## 2 Tilt your head to each side

- Tilt your head so your ear moves toward your shoulder. Keep your shoulders still; don't shrug up to meet your ear.
- Hold 3 seconds, bring your head back to the middle, then tilt to the other side.

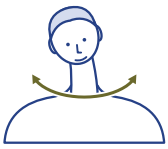
**Repetitions:** 5–10 times each side.




## 3 Turn to look over your shoulder

- Keeping your chin level, turn your head to look over your left shoulder. Hold 3 seconds.
- Come back to the middle, then turn to look over your right shoulder.

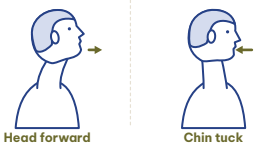
**Repetitions:** 5–10 times each side.



## 4 Front half circle

- Bend forward slightly and let your chin glide from your left shoulder, across your chest, to your right shoulder; then glide back.
- Go only through the front half circle; don't circle your head to the back.

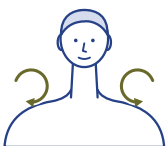
**Repetitions:** 5 rounds there and back.




## 5 Chin tuck

- Eyes looking straight ahead, draw your chin straight back until a fold forms under it. Don't nod down or look up.
- Hold 5 seconds, then release.

**Repetitions:** 10 times. Do a few extra whenever you sit at a computer for a long time.



## 6 Shoulder rolls

- Roll both shoulders in a slow circle: lift up, pull back, lower down.
- Arms hanging loose, neck still.

**Repetitions:** 10 circles.

*A light stretch is enough — stop at sharp pain.*

## PART B. ISOMETRIC HOLDS (STRENGTH WITHOUT MOVING)

Start once your neck hurts less, usually from week 2. How to do it: push your head into your palm while your hand holds it back, so your head stays still. Push only lightly, about three-tenths of your strength, like pushing a light door; you should still be able to talk normally while pushing. Hold for a slow count to 10, breathing steadily. Rest a few seconds, then repeat.



### 7 Front press

- Place your palm on your forehead.
- Push your forehead forward into your hand; your hand keeps your head from moving.

**Repetitions:** 5 times, counting to 10 each time.



### 8 Back press

- Place your hand (or both hands, fingers laced) behind your head, on the bump at the back of your head.
- Push your head back into your hand, keeping your chin level.

**Repetitions:** 5 times, counting to 10 each time.



### 9 Side press

- Press your palm against your temple.
- Push your head sideways into your hand while your hand resists. Finish one side, then switch.

**Repetitions:** 5 times each side.



### 10 Turning press

- Press your palm against your cheek, near the angle of your jaw.
- Try to turn your head toward your hand, but your hand resists, so your head doesn't move. Switch sides.

**Repetitions:** 5 times each side.

## PART C. GENTLE STRETCH AND CHEST OPENING



### 11 Neck and shoulder stretch

- Hold the edge of the chair with your left hand. Tilt your head to the right.
- Rest your right hand lightly on your head, letting only its weight pull gently. A light stretch on the left side of your neck is enough.
- Hold 20–30 seconds, then do the other side.

**Repetitions:** 2–3 times each side.

*Note: Don't use your hand to pull your head down.*



### 12 Chest opener, shoulder blade squeeze

- Bend both arms into a W shape, elbows at your sides.
- Pull your elbows down and back, squeezing your shoulder blades together. Hold 5 seconds.

**Repetitions:** 10 times. Good for people who sit at a computer a lot.

*Keep your head still; let the muscles work.*

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## EVERYDAY HABITS FOR A HEALTHY NECK

- Put your computer screen at eye level.
- Hold your phone up in front of your face; don't bend your neck down to look at it.
- About every 30 minutes of sitting, stand up and do moves 3 and 5.
- Use a pillow just high enough to keep your neck in line with your body; when lying on your side, the pillow should be as high as your shoulder is wide.
- Avoid sleeping on your stomach.
- Don't hold your phone between your ear and shoulder.
- When carrying heavy things, split the load between both hands.
- When your neck feels tired, warm the back of it for 15–20 minutes with a warm towel or heat pack; test the heat on your wrist first to avoid burns.
- Don't let a fan or air conditioner blow straight onto the back of your neck. Traditional medicine sees the nape of the neck as a place where cold wind gets in easily, making the neck stiff.
- If your hair is wet, dry it before going to bed.
- At a hair salon, ask for a towel under your neck, and don't tip your neck back over the wash basin for too long.

### ⚠ STOP EXERCISING AND TELL THE CLINIC IF

- ◇ After exercising, the pain increases and lasts more than 2 hours, or it hurts more the next morning than the day before.
- ◇ Numbness, tingling or weakness spreads down into your arm or hand.
- ◇ You feel dizzy or nauseous, or your vision blurs while exercising.
- ◇ Your hands get clumsier over time: buttoning your shirt becomes hard, you often drop things.
- ◇ You are unsteady when walking or standing.

### GO TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT RIGHT AWAY IF

- ! You have sudden, severe neck pain or headache, completely different from any you have had before, especially on one side.
- ! You have neck pain or headache with any of these signs: a drooping eyelid, double vision, difficulty speaking, difficulty swallowing, facial numbness, weakness on one side of the body, staggering when you walk.
- ! You have neck pain with a high fever, a stiff neck you cannot bend forward, or drowsiness.
- ! You have severe neck pain, or numbness or weakness in your arms or legs, after an accident or fall.

## TRACKING CHART

Tick off the parts you did each day. Rate your pain from 0 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain). Bring this chart to your follow-up visit.

| Day | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Part A | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Part B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Part C | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pain 0–10 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

### FURTHER READING ON OUR WEBSITE

Scan the code to read the clinic's Self-Care at Home articles in English, with more exercises and other guides.

**dongytamduc.com/en/blog**

### REFERENCES


- NHS (UK). Exercises for neck pain. nhs.uk.
- Blanpied PR et al. Neck Pain: Revision 2017. J Orthop Sports Phys Ther 2017;47(7):A1–A83.
- Jull G, Moore A, Falla D et al. Grieve's Modern Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy, 4th ed., 2015, Chapter 41, p. 413.
- Rushton A et al. International Framework for Examination of the Cervical Region (IFOMPT), 2020 (PMID 36099171).
- Illustrations redrawn by the clinic based on the NHS exercise set and popular neck exercise charts.