

Taking Care of Your Neck

I. PROPER POSTURE:

- Reduce forward head and elevated and rounded shoulder position.
- Sitting: Sit in a firm chair with arm rests and lumbar spine support, slouching in a chair causes your head to be in a forward position putting stress on the muscles and ligaments of your neck.

II. ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING:

Sleeping posture:

- Avoid sleeping on your stomach.
- For side and back sleeping use a pillow that allows your neck to be in a neutral position, not tilted to the side or forward.

Reading:

- Bring your reading material closer to eye level with your arms supported.
- If reading in bed lie on your back with your head supported on the pillow in a neutral position, place another pillow on your chest and support your arms and reading material on the pillow.

Household Activities:

- Spread your heavy duties out over several days. Take frequent breaks during each activity. Ask for help when you need to.
- Vacuuming, Sweeping, and Raking: Maintain the normal curves in your spine and don't twist. Work only in a small area at a time and then move your feet to advance to new area or to turn in another direction. Use tools that fit you. It will be awkward and cause strain if your broom or rake is too tall or too short for you.

Work habits:

- Use a phone cradle or head set so that your head is not tilted to the side.
- Work station: Discuss specifics with your therapist.

III. TREATMENT:

- Your physical therapist will develop a treatment plan for you based on their evaluation, with an individualized exercise program for you to follow. If any exercise you perform increases your symptoms, stop the exercise and notify your therapist.

Relaxation: The goal of relaxation- is to recognize muscle tension, and to control it.

- Diaphragmatic breathing:
 - Place one hand on your abdomen, just below your ribs
 - Fill up as you breathe *in* – Flatten as you breathe *out*
 - If you are tense the action will occur higher in your chest – think “abdominal breathing”