

This leaflet should only be used by specific individuals following physiotherapy assessment. If you have any concerns, please speak to your physiotherapist.

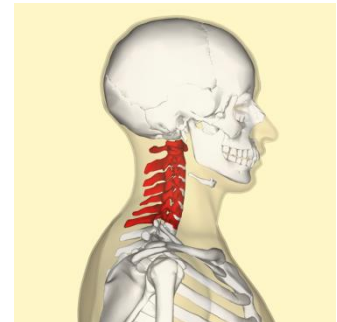
Cervical spine surgery physiotherapy advice

Information for patients

Information following cervical spine surgery

You have had an operation on your neck. The information in this leaflet is provided to:

- Promote healing
- Prevent muscle spasm
- Prevent stiffness and decreased range of movement
- Promote good postural awareness
- Provide advice on return to activity.



Recovery

The initial post-operative pain will settle and tissues begin to heal in the first 4-6 weeks. Healing should be complete by 3-6 months. The settling of nerve pain, weakness and altered sensations can be variable and take some time.

You may be given a collar to wear after your operation at the request of your surgeon. We will advise you accordingly.

Return to activity

A gradual return to activity is advised. Pace yourself during the day- do 'little bits' often and slowly increase your activity within the limits of your pain.

- Walk every day. Try to increase how far you walk each day
- Don't twist, push, pull, or lift anything heavier than a couple of kilograms (a kettle full of water). Gradually increase your load after six weeks.
- Change your position often. Vary activity to prevent joint stiffness and pain due to being too still. Alternate between walking, sitting and lying. Gradually increase the time of each activity.
- Avoid driving for the first 2-4 weeks. You must be able to turn to have full visibility and do an emergency stop safely. Individual insurance policies may vary.
- Return to work can vary according to your job. Start with light duties and build up a return to light activities in 4-6 weeks. Jobs involving manual labour will take longer. Your surgeon, GP or physiotherapist can advise you.
- Return to exercise and sport can start at 8-12 weeks. Some activities may take longer. Please discuss further with your physiotherapist.

Posture

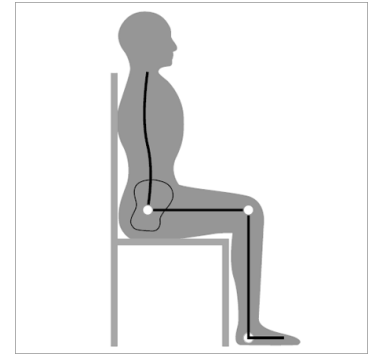
It may be your natural reaction to 'protect' your surgical site. Try not to tense your shoulders, as this will lead to muscle spasm and an increase in pain. Try to relax this area, gently moving within your limits of pain.

We will give you a separate exercise sheet advising which movements to do.

Sitting posture

A chair with good back support is advised

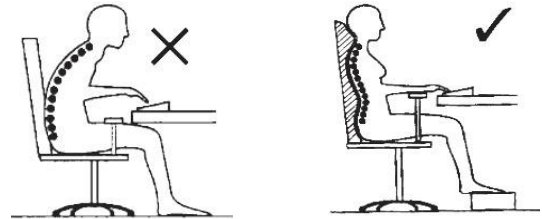
- Keep your chin tucked in
- Shoulders relaxed, down and back
- There should be a curve in your lower back. A cushion or rolled up towel may support this position
- Your feet should be flat on the floor



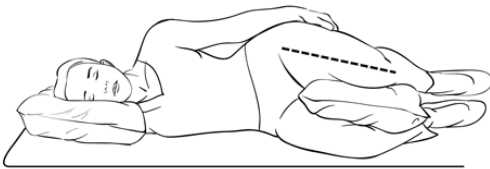
Sitting posture

If you have a job that involves a lot of sitting, an ergonomic work station assessment may be beneficial.

Regular position change is important.



Sleeping



- You should have appropriate pillow support (1 pillow)
- The space between your ear and shoulder should be filled to keep your head and neck straight
- You can lie on your side or back as long as your neck is well supported.

Pain control

Following your surgery, you may need regular pain medication until things begin to settle. Consult your GP on discharge about your pain relief if it does not improve.

Heat packs over your shoulder and neck muscles can:

- Help relax them
- Be soothing
- Aid movement.

Apply the heat pack for 10 to 15 minutes at a time. Avoid applying it directly over your stitches.

This leaflet was compiled by DCN Physiotherapy by The Patient Information Leaflet Group, NHS Lothian Physiotherapy Services.

Ref: Cervical Surgery: Post-op advice, April 2021.