neck class
KAISER PERMANENTE FREMONT PHYSICAL THERAPY
Hello and welcome to the neck class

Often people with neck pain respond well with a series of progressive exercises as well as posture and body mechanic training. For this reason you have been selected for this class.

These exercises should not create your pain. If they hurt, do them more gently or with more breaks. If you have any questions or problems please contact or notify the Physical Therapist instructing your class.

Kaiser Permanente Fremont
Physical Therapy Department
(510) 248-3200
What You Can Do

- Identify activities that make your neck better or worse. Listen to your body.
- Control your own symptoms.
- Be willing to change and begin with small steps.
GOOD AND BAD POSTURE

Good Posture

Bad Posture
POSTURE

• Reading in bed or sleeping with a high pillow is a frequent cause of neck pain

• Watching TV from the bed or sofa is a common cause of neck strain

• Sleeping while sitting up in a seat is not good for your neck

• Sleeping on your stomach increases sway back and twists the neck

• Don’t bend over a desk while reading or writing

• Don’t lean over the steering wheel while driving and don’t drive with the seat too far back or too low

• Don’t reach up or look up for any length of time

• Wearing glasses with bifocals may cause an upward tilt of the head resulting in neck strain

• Don’t lift anything too heavy; remember everything you do with your arm affects your neck

• Avoid repeated or sustained twisting of your neck and/or shoulders

• Don’t cradle the telephone

• Modify the things you must do that are not good for your neck
POSITION AND ACTIVITY GUIDELINES TO PROMOTE HEALING
AND MINIMIZE SYMPTOMS

Sitting
Avoid sitting slumped with the head forward
or tilted to the side. Support low back with
folded towel. Support arms on armrests of
chairs or pillows to unload shoulders and
neck. Avoid sitting more than 20–30 minutes.

Daily Activities
During daily activities that require you to
stand, place one foot on a step. Avoid lifting as it
increases the tension in the neck muscles. As time allows, for every hour
you are up, lie down for 5 minutes to allow inflamed tissues to rest.

Sleeping
Lying on your side, use one pillow
between your legs for comfort and another
pillow to support your head and neck in the
midline position. Press the pillow into the crook
of your neck. Do not sleep on your stomach.

Decreasing the Stress
Be in tune with your body and the feeling of tension in your neck and shoulders when
you are under stress. Try to just let go of the tension. Try relaxation exercises, abdominal
breathing, visualization.
POSITION AND ACTIVITY GUIDELINES TO PROMOTE HEALING AND MINIMIZE SYMPTOMS

Gentle Movements
Do the following movement every 1–2 hours throughout the day. Repeat each movement 5–20 times slowly and in a pain-free range. Stop if the movement increases your symptoms.

Abdominal Breathing:
1. Lie on your back with head supported in neutral.
2. Place one hand on lower stomach.
3. Breathe in through nose; attempt to make hand on stomach rise.
4. Breathe out slowly through mouth.
ANATOMY

Vertebra

Nerves pass between vertebrae and out to fingers

Disk

Vertebra

Nerve

Spinal Cord

Nerves pass between vertebrae and out to fingers
NECK AND ARM PAIN

Due to Cervical Nerve Irritation

Why Does My Arm Hurt?
The nerves that send messages to and from the hand pass through bony canals of the spinal column in the lower part of the neck. When a nerve in the neck is irritated or swollen, you may feel pain and tingling in part of the arm or hand. You may also feel pain in the shoulder or upper back. You may or may not feel pain or stiffness in the neck.

What Causes the Nerves to Become Irritated?
Repeated movements or sustained positions may cause irritation of the nerve. The joints very close to the nerve may become stressed and inflamed.

Arthritis or age-related changes may cause bony spurring and narrowing of the nerve canals. Arthritic joints may become inflamed by repeated movements or sustained positions.

In rare instances the disc in the neck may become injured irritating the nerve.

How Long Will the Symptoms Last?
If nerve inflammation is reduced and irritating movements and positions are avoided, you should expect slow steady recovery in 6–8 weeks. Usually the pain will improve before the numbness, tingling, or weakness.
MOVEMENT

Neutral and flexion

Sidebending left and right

Rotation right and left

Chin Nod
How to sit at a computer

Adjust seat height so upper arms hang vertically, elbows bent at 90° or less.

Adjust backrest to support the small of the back.

When sitting, your knees should be about the same level as your hips or lower.

Position monitor 18–28 inches away from eyes.

Adjust monitor height so top of screen is 5–15° below horizontal line of sight.

Hold wrists in a neutral position, not bent upward or downward.

Use a document holder next to the screen rather than laying papers flat.

Use a foot rest, if necessary, to adjust for height.
**SELF-TREATMENT**

**Cold Treatment**
- *Always* use cold with an acute injury
- Do not use ice for more than 20 minutes every two hours
- Use ice for 5–7 days after an injury

**Options for Cold Packs**
- Pliable gel pack
- Bag of frozen vegetables
- Freezing solution of 1 part alcohol to 3 parts water in a resealable bag. Place one layer of towel or pillowcase between ice and skin

**Heat Treatment**
- Heat may be the first choice when dealing with stiffness and chronic pain
- The desirable reactions take place within the first 20–30 minutes of heat application

**Heat Techniques to Use at Home**
- Warm showers. Not baths because the position may aggravate your neck
- A “moist heat” electric heating pad at the low setting
- A warm damp towel
- A commercial hot pack (follow instructions carefully)

**Precautions with Cold or Heat Treatments**
- Check skin before, during, and after these treatments
- Do not use heat or cold if the skin is broken, blistered, or rash
- Do not use topical agents with heat or cold; this could blister the skin
- Be especially careful if you have diabetes, circulatory problems, or decreased sensation
EXERCISES

• Start your exercises slowly by doing 3–5 repetitions of each of these exercises 3–4 times a day until your pain decreases
• Do not rush or strain when you exercise
• Do not hold your breath when you exercise
• Do not do any exercise that causes pain or increases pain

Chin Nod Sitting
Sitting, drop chin down approximately 1 inch.

Pectoralis Stretch
Stand at doorway with forearms on door frame, elbows bent to 90°. Keep back straight and step forward with one leg until a gentle stretch is felt across the chest and in front of the shoulders. Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat 5 times. Do 3 times a day.
EXERCISES

Shoulder Rolls
• Sitting or standing, roll shoulders backward in circles using forward-up-back-down motion. Try not to arch back.

Shoulder Blade Pinch
• Sitting or standing with arms up, pinch shoulder blades together and downwards. Take care not to lift your shoulders or arch your back.
Cervical Active Range of Motion

These exercises are simple movements. They should be done short of pain. They can restore movement or maintain current range of movement. Remember to breathe normally and relax. Each exercise should be done while sitting, two times per day.

**Chin to Chest**
- Head in the neutral position. Lower your chin to chest. Hold 5 seconds, relax. Repeat 5 times.

**Head Turns**
- Head in the neutral position. Rotate head to look over (a) right shoulder, hold for 5 seconds, rest; (b) repeat same exercise toward the left. Repeat both exercises five times.

**Ear to Shoulder Tilts**
- Head in the neutral position. (a) Bend right ear to right shoulder. Keep the shoulder down, and hold for 5 seconds, rest; (b) Bend left ear to left shoulder. Hold for 5 seconds, rest. Repeat both exercises 5 times.

NOTE: Take care not to elevate the shoulder. Your shoulders should be relaxed and the movement should be from the neck.
**EXERCISES**

Upper Trapezius Stretch

- Hold for 30 seconds

- Alternate arm swing

- Repeat motion 15–30 seconds

- Elbow pull

- Repeat motion 15–30 seconds

**Cardiovascular Exercises**

- Walk: 20–30 minutes a day
- Swim: Watch stroke selection
- Walk
- Bike: Watch neck position
- Walk
- Be active: Rollerblade, run, stairmaster
## NECK CLASS GUIDELINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you are better</th>
<th>If you are worse</th>
<th>If you are the same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continue</td>
<td>Call the physical therapy department</td>
<td>Try the exercise routine for an additional 2–3 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put knowledge to use</td>
<td>Please tell the receptionist you have completed the neck class and you are worse</td>
<td>If symptoms persist, call the Physical Therapy Department (510) 248-3200</td>
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## ACTION PLAN

I will make the following change with my posture:

_________________________________________________________________________________

I will include the following exercise(s):

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

I will do the following self-treatment:

_________________________________________________________________________________