

IMG PHYSICAL THERAPY

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Cervicogenic Headache Prevention Home Exercise Sheet


A cervicogenic headache is caused by a dysfunction of the upper cervical spine. This includes the discs between the vertebrae, stiff vertebral joints, and muscular injuries. These injuries can be a result of a traumatic event such as a car accident or more benign and long term stresses such as improper posture. Symptoms of this type of headache include: pain that begins in the neck and radiates to the back of the head/face/behind the eyes, pain that is worse with neck movements, tender neck muscles, and decreased and/or painful motion of the neck.

- The exercises outlined on this form are designed to help address some of these deficits and to hopefully reduce the symptoms related to this type of headache.
- These exercises are not designed to necessarily stop a headache that is already in progress but rather to help decrease the frequency, duration and intensity of headaches over time.
- Any specific exercise that causes pain is hindering the healing process for your injury and should be modified or discontinued
- Swelling after exercise indicates that the exercise is too difficult or is not being done correctly. You need to change your program to eliminate the problem
- Re-injury/aggravation during the rehabilitation process will slow your progress. If you get recurring pain either lower the resistance, lower the number of sets or repetitions, or reduce the range of motion to avoid the area of pain.
- Consult your Physician or Physical Therapist if any problems arise or if you have any questions regarding an exercise. It is better to make sure that you are doing an exercise correctly than to cause further injury by using incorrect form.
- Exercises should be performed once per day, 5-10 repetitions each. This should take about 15-20 minutes.
- Attempt to perform the exercises slowly without movements of the spine or rib cage.
- Begin with exercises 1, 2, and 3.
- As these become easier progress to 4, 5, 6, and 7.
- Exercise 8 is very difficult and should be used only when you feel very confident with the preceding exercises.

Rehabilitation of the cervical spine can take a long time and it may be come frustrating at times. However with hard work and determination you can be successful and reduce the frequency, intensity, and duration of your headaches.

Initial position	Lying on your back with knees bent and feet flat with a towel loosely rolled and placed under the back of your head just below the ears.	
<p>1. <u>Lower abdominal exercise</u></p>	<p>Raise shoulder blades up and together keeping chin down; hold this position. Tighten your abdominal muscles by pulling your navel towards the table. Now raise 1 leg, then the other. Slowly lower one leg at a time to the start position.</p>	
<p>2. <u>Upper Cervical flexion</u></p>	<p>Move your chin towards your adam's apple without lifting back of head off the surface. Hold for 5 seconds and relax. You should feel a stretch on the back of your head.</p>	
<p>3. <u>Upper cervical flexion with head lift</u></p>	<p>1. Bring your chin down to your adam's apple. With the help of your hands lift your head off the table maintaining the position of your chin. Slowly lower back to the start position. 2. If this becomes easy you can do the exercise without the help of your hands.</p>	

Initial position	Sitting with back against wall with arms supported on a pillow. Each begins by tightening abdominals by pulling navel in and raising shoulder blades up and together	
4. <u>Upper cervical flexion</u>	<p>Move your neck bringing chin towards adam's apple. Keeping your head close to the wall, you should feel a stretch in the back of your neck</p>	
5. <u>Upper cervical rotation</u>	<p>Perform above exercise then rotate your head 5 times to the right, and repeat to the left. Try not to bend your neck to the side and perform the motion in a pain free range.</p>	
6. <u>Shoulder flexion against wall</u>	<p>Raise arms overhead with thumbs pointed up. Do not let your low back move away from wall and keep your chin down</p>	

Initial position	Facing the wall placing hands on the wall and slide hands overhead up the wall	
7. <u>Arm slide with shoulder blade squeeze</u>	Squeeze your shoulder blades together and lift your hands off the wall. Keep abdominal muscles tight and chin down. Return hands to the wall.	
Initial position	Lying on stomach with arms over head	
8. <u>Shoulder blade squeeze</u>	Squeeze shoulder blades together and then lift arms off of the table. Return to start and repeat	