

Summary:

- Neck Pain is very common in the UK and World-wide.
- Many structures can cause pain and the majority will heal in normal healing times of 2-6 weeks.
- Evidence suggests that taking anti inflammatory medication at the initial stages following an injury might delay your healing by suppressing chemicals required for repair.
- X-Rays only show bones and are therefore rarely needed if you haven't had any significant impact/fall that might indicate a fracture. Other things shown on X-Rays such as mild joint degeneration are normal for many people and in many cases are present in people without pain.
- Scans (e.g MRI) are not normally required in the first instance as they don't change your initial management.
- "Hands on" treatment techniques applied by a Physiotherapist are often useful in easing your pain.
- For advice on using ice and heat, please visit our website.
- Regular movement and exercise is important to aid your recovery and ease pain. Unless fractured we NEVER advise anyone to wear a neck collar.
- Regular movement of the neck will aid your recovery and maintain mobility in the joints. Use pain as a guide initially, but avoid keeping your neck completely still.
- Take regular breaks from sitting at the computer and other activities involving prolonged static postures. Your physiotherapist will be able to advise you further on correct postures in the work place.



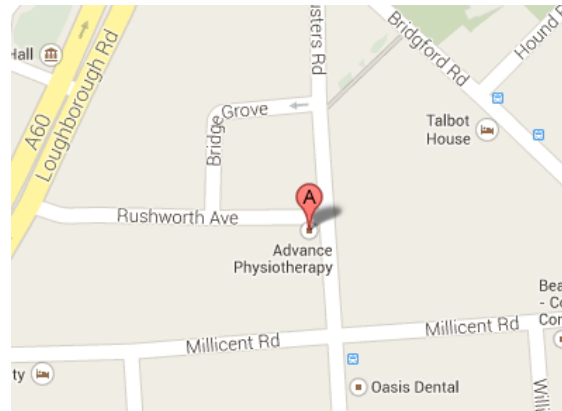
www.advance-physiotherapy.com

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Registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

Our Physiotherapists are all Senior Level Therapists and strongly believe in "Hands On" treatment techniques for the majority of our patients.

The experience of our clinicians ranges from NHS hospitals through to Elite sports clubs and supporting Team GB athletes at the Olympic Games.



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Neck Pain
Patient Information Sheet

Neck Pain—The Facts

Neck pain is a common condition that can cause substantial disability.

- In the working population the annual prevalence of neck pain ranges from 19% to 48%.
- Almost 2 out of 3 people will experience neck pain at some point in their lives.
- Of the 291 conditions in the Global Burden of Disease 2010 study, neck pain ranked fourth highest in terms of number of years lost to disability.

Causes of pain

There are multiple structures that can cause pain in your neck and establishing the exact structure can on occasions be difficult. However as long as your Doctor/Physiotherapist ensures the pain is from a mechanical structure (e.g. ligament, muscle or joint) then your treatment principles remain the same.

If you have any of the following symptoms you should consult with you GP urgently:

**Dizziness, double vision, changes in speech/
swallowing, unexplained fainting episodes.**

The source of pain can include **traumatic events** (e.g. falls, heavy lifting or whiplash injury) **repetitive loading** (including sitting in one position too long—particularly with a poor posture) or **specific pathologies** such as osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis.

Healing

There are three stages of healing of a damaged structure.

1. Inflammation (2 hours -2 weeks)

Within minutes of an injury, the healing process will begin. Blood flow will increase to the damaged area to bring chemicals to aid this process. Inflammation is therefore an important part of the initial healing process and some research suggests **not** taking anti-inflammatory medication (e.g. Ibuprofen) during the first **48hrs** of the pain to allow the body to deliver healing cells/chemicals to the area. Immediately suppressing this response may delay your healing. During this time you should avoid activities that increase your pain too much and take simple pain relief such as Paracetamol. If this is not effective, speak to your GP about alternative pain relief.

2. Repair Stage (2 Days to 6 weeks)

In this stage the body repairs itself as it lays down new tissue to repair the damaged area. Activity should be slowly increased using pain as your guide, and the muscles around your neck should be exercised regularly.

3. Remodelling Stage (Can exceed 12 months)

The new tissue adopts strength, stability and range dependent on the forces it is exposed to for several months after injury. It is therefore important to continue exercising the tissue during this phase even if your pain has gone.

X-rays and scans are often **not necessary** in the diagnosis of neck complaints. Your GP and physiotherapist will be able to advise as to whether these are warranted in your case but they would not change your initial management in the majority of cases.

Exercises

The following exercises are very simple strengthening and range of motion drills that will aid your recovery if performed as your pain allows.



Isometric exercises.

Using your hands as shown in the pictures, push gently against your head in each direction, and use your neck muscles to stop your head from moving.

Hold for 20 seconds each direction and repeat each direction x3.



Range of motion

Move your head in each direction to the end of your comfortable range (as shown in the pictures above)

Repeat x5 each direction.

Repeat this several times per day.