

# Neck injury

## Emergency Department Patient Information Leaflet

### Introduction

This leaflet is for people who have a neck injury. It includes information about what causes neck injuries, how they are treated and what to do when you get home.

### What causes neck injuries?

Neck injuries can be caused by sudden movement of the head forwards, backwards or sideways. It occurs when the soft tissues in the neck become stretched and damaged (sprained).

It can take several hours for the symptoms to develop after you injure your neck. The symptoms are often worse the day after the injury and may continue to get worse for several days.

This type of injury will often get better within a few weeks or months, but for some people it can last longer and severely limit their activities.

## What should I do at home?

- Take painkillers such as ibuprofen or paracetamol to relieve the pain if you can take them (always read label; do not exceed the recommended dose).
- Avoid lifting heavy objects.
- Keep your neck mobile and continue with your normal activities – this will help stop your neck from becoming stiff. Using a neck brace or collar is not recommended.
- Apply ice on your neck to reduce any swelling. You can use crushed ice or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel. Do this for 10 minutes every four to six hours. **Caution** – ice can cause burns so do not apply directly to your skin.
- Sleeping either on your back or on your side is a better position for your neck.
- Use a pillow to support your neck when you are lying down or sitting. Make sure you keep your head straight:
  - If your pillows are too thick, your head will be pushed up.
  - Your head will drop down and not be straight if your pillows are too narrow.

## What to look out for

If you develop any of the symptoms below, please consult your GP or return to the Emergency Department

- Tingling or numbness in your arms
- Inability to use your arm or hand
- Weakness in your arm or hand
- Significant pain not relieved by analgesia

## Exercise

You can do the following exercises 10 to 15 times, every one to two hours, within comfort. Before you start the exercises, make sure you are sitting up straight and comfortably. If the exercises make your symptoms worse, stop them:

- Tuck your chin into your chest and then relax
- Turn your head round and then look over each shoulder in turn
- Touch your ear down onto your shoulder on both sides.
- Bend your head backwards and forwards.

## Follow-up care

If you have queries when you get home, please contact your GP or NHS 111.

If you still have symptoms after a week, see your GP.

### Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following weblinks:

#### **NHS Choices**

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/whiplash/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Neck-pain/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please speak to one of our nurses. If you need help when you return home, please contact your GP.

#### **This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:**

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/accident-emergency/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email [dgft.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:dgft.patient.information@nhs.net)

**This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.**

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ، ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru vă rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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