

FREE REHAB GUIDE

Desk Neck Pain: Your 5-Minute Daily Reset

Simple exercises and everyday habits for a stiff, sore neck and upper back from long days at a desk.

Neck pain from desk work is rarely caused by one "bad" posture. More often it comes from staying in any position for too long. I'm Ash, an osteopath in Eltham, and this is the routine I give my desk-based patients.

What this guide focuses on

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Common culprits to check

Your set-up. Is your screen at eye level and straight in front of you, or are you always looking down or to one side?

Phone, couch and bed. Long stretches looking down at your phone, or watching TV propped up in bed or twisted on the couch.

Movement breaks. Get up every 45–60 minutes. Even one exercise from this guide helps.

Sleep and water. A pillow that keeps your neck roughly in line with your spine, and staying hydrated through the day.

How to use this guide

Start at the lower end of each range and build up. Mild discomfort up to 3/10 is OK if it settles within 24 hours.

Headache? Stop, rest and use heat. Start again once it clears.

See a health professional first if

You have numbness, tingling or weakness in your arm · dizziness · a sudden, severe headache · pain after a fall or accident · pain that's worse at night or comes with feeling unwell.

2 Neck and shoulders

Little and often, through your workday

These keep your neck moving and build strength in the small muscles that support it. Slow, controlled movements matter more than how far you go.

YOUR NECK

Chin tucks

8–10 reps, 1–2× a day

Sit tall with your eyes level. Gently draw your chin straight back, like making a small double chin. Hold 5–10 seconds. It's a small glide, not a nod.

Neck extensions

2–3 × 6–12

Slowly look up towards the ceiling, hold for 3 seconds, then return. Easy to do at your desk as often as you like.

Gentle neck movement

10 each way, daily

Chin to chest, look up, turn to each side, then tilt your ear towards your shoulder without lifting the shoulder.

"Smelly armpit" stretch

2–3 × 30 seconds

Turn your head about 45° away from the sore side and look down towards that armpit. Use the hand on the side you're facing to gently ease your head down.

YOUR SHOULDERS

Shoulder rolls

10–20 reps, often

Roll your shoulders up, back and down in big, slow circles. Backward rolls help open up the front after time hunched forwards.

Band pull-aparts

2–3 × 12–15

Hold a light band at shoulder height, arms straight. Pull it apart by squeezing your shoulder blades together, then return slowly.

Little and often wins: a few reps every hour does more than one long session at night. Set a reminder on your phone or computer.

3 Your mid-back

A stiff mid-back makes your neck work harder

Foam roller-back extension **2 × 8–10**

Have foam roller horizontal along your shoulder blades and lay on it. Hands behind your head, gently arch back over the roller, then return back up.

Open book **2 × 8 each side**

Lie on your side, knees bent, arms out in front. Open your top arm across like a book, following it with your eyes, then return. (can also do this standing, up against a wall)

Use heat as much as you like

Wheat bags, hot showers, heat packs or heat creams, whatever works for you. Especially helpful during flare-ups or headaches.

Your 5-minute desk reset

Every 45–60 minutes, or at least 3× a day

1. Stand up and do **10 shoulder rolls**
2. **5 chin tucks**, holding each for 5 seconds
3. **Gentle neck movement**, 5 each direction
4. **5 chair-back extensions**
5. **"Smelly armpit" stretch**, 30 seconds each side

Want a plan built around your neck?

I'm Ash, an osteopath in Eltham. I offer home visits around Eltham and surrounding suburbs, plus 1-on-1 online rehab wherever you are.

Book at quinnosteopathyrecovery.com.au · Call 0447 861 898 · DM "NECK" to @quinnosteopathyrecovery



Scan for exercise demos on Instagram

This guide is general information only and isn't a substitute for an individual assessment. Stop any exercise that causes sharp or worsening pain, and see a health professional if you're unsure.