

pain is worse when you walk, then it may be that you are walking along looking at the ground. This puts a lot of strain on the muscles at the back of the neck, as they pull to keep your head upright. You should walk with your head comfortably 'balanced' on your neck.

Swimming can also be very suitable for people who have neck pain. Again, it is a matter of how you do it. Swimming crawl (freestyle) is best, and it can be worth having swimming lessons to get this right. Swimming breaststroke with your head always out of the water is least likely to be comfortable.

Cycling on an upright bicycle can be very good exercise when you have neck pain. However, riding a racing bicycle with your head pulled up all the time is probably not going to help.

• **Stress**

You may notice that your neck becomes more uncomfortable during or shortly after stressful times, at home or at work. If you do, then you have an opportunity to try not to become so responsive to stressful events. You can do this consciously, by thinking about relaxing or about 'not letting things get to you', or by meditating or doing extra semi-supine (see above).

• **Summary**

Hopefully this has given you a few useful pointers to managing your neck pain yourself, and without tablets or injections. If you can start to feel more in control, you may notice that your pain or discomfort improves a little by itself.

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Neck Pain

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Managing Neck Pain

This leaflet is intended to help you to manage your own neck pain or discomfort as much as possible. Pain felt in the neck, or as tension headaches, has many origins and causes, but often quite simple techniques can be very useful in controlling your symptoms.

• “Treat Your Own Neck”

This book provides useful advice on managing your neck pain or headaches, with stretches and exercises.

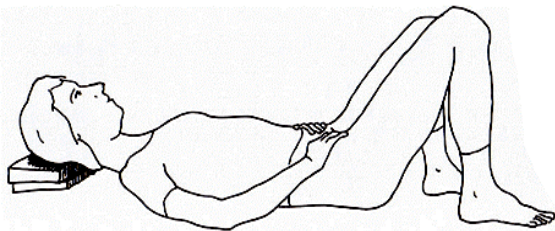
(ISBN: [0473002094](https://www.isbn-international.org/details/9780473002094)) by **Robin McKenzie**

Available to buy from:

www.abebooks.co.uk second hand, or via Amazon www.amazon.com

• Semi-supine

This is a central part of Alexander Technique teaching. It is simple to do without having any instruction, and if repeated daily for about 20 minutes can interrupt the feedback that makes the muscles around the neck stiff and tight.



Semi-supine

Line drawing by Delia Rosenboom

While in semi-supine you should lie with your head on a book. Start with a few thin paperbacks, varying the height to be most comfortable. The rest of your body should be lying on comfortable carpet or thick rug. Don't lie on the bed for semi-supine, as it is too soft.

Once you are settled in semi-supine, you will need to relax muscles. It can be counter-productive to lie there trying to relax, so instead try *wishing* to be relaxed. It sounds unlikely, but it can be helpful!

So, the muscles to relax are:

Neck, down at the front to your **chest**, at the sides down your **arms** and into your **hands** (un-ball your fists!), and at the back to your **upper back**, **lower back**, **buttocks** and **legs** to your **feet**.

Relax your **face**, including your **jaw** (un-clench your teeth!), your **eyes** and your **forehead**. Relax your **scalp**.

• Massage

You probably have what are called trigger points not only around your neck and shoulders, but also down your back, in your buttocks and even down your legs – especially at the back. You may also have a trigger point in the web space between your thumb and forefinger on each hand, and in the forearm muscles – follow up your arm in a line from your thumb and massage the quite big muscle just below the elbow.

It might be worth paying for regular massage of your neck and back, if you can. Otherwise, many trigger points can be reached easily yourself. You should press on each one for a count of ten, then release. If they are difficult to reach, you may be able to massage them by lying on the floor and applying pressure with a tennis ball, underneath your body. How firmly you can apply the pressure will depend on how sore your muscles are.

Reflexology is about massaging the feet to stimulate healing in different parts of the body. Whether it works for all conditions or not, it can be surprisingly helpful if you have neck pain to massage your own feet. Follow along the inside edge between the ball of the foot and the heel, at the same side as your big toe. Again, press for a count of ten and then release.

• Exercise

You may have been given specific exercises for your neck at some time. Try to do these regularly in small amounts: 'little and often' rather than occasional bursts. It is sometimes easier to start doing them lying down or after applying heat to your neck or following a shower. If you have difficulty, ask for advice on how they may be adapted.

It is important not to stop exercising, even when you have neck pain. Some sports can be uncomfortable, but others can work very well. Walking should not be a problem; if you find that your neck