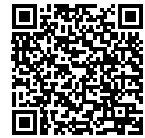


PAIN & INJURY GUIDE

Swimmer's neck pain: your 5-minute routine



Scan for the full guide

Gentle neck, upper-back and trunk movements for swimmers who get tight and sore through the neck and mid-back.

How often: Once a day, on most days of the week. Give it a few weeks before judging how it is going.

Total time: about 5 minutes. **You will need:** nothing special.

Before you start

- This is general information based on NHS physiotherapy leaflets. It is not a personal treatment plan. If a doctor, physiotherapist or osteopath has given you different advice, follow that.
- Move slowly and smoothly. Mild discomfort or a stretching feeling is fine. Sharp pain is not.
- The pain should settle back to your usual level within an hour or two. If it is worse the next day, do fewer repeats or a smaller movement, or leave that exercise out for a few days.

Your routine

1

Gentle neck turns

about 1 min

Sit or stand tall with your shoulders relaxed.

Slowly turn your head to look over one shoulder, as far as is comfortable, then turn to the other side.

How much: 5 turns each way, slowly

2

Chin tuck

about 1 min

Sit tall with your eyes level.

Glide your chin straight back, as if making a double chin, until you feel a gentle stretch at the back of your neck.

Return to the start.

How much: 10 slow repeats

3

Seated trunk turn

about 1 min

Sit tall with your arms crossed over your chest.

Gently turn your upper body to one side, come back to the middle, then turn to the other side.

How much: 5 each way

4

Open-book reach on all fours

about 1 min

On hands and knees, lift one arm out to the side while turning your upper body to follow it with your eyes.

Lower it and repeat on the other side.

How much: 5 each side

5

Cat and camel

about 1 min

On hands and knees, hands under shoulders and knees under hips.

Slowly round your back up towards the ceiling, then let it sag gently down, keeping your neck long.

How much: 10 slow repeats

Good to know

- If a swimming stroke or breathing pattern brings the pain on, ease off that part of your session while you settle it down.

Easier, or harder?

- Too sore? Do fewer repeats, make the movement smaller, or miss that exercise out for a few days.
- Feeling good? Only add a few repeats, or a second set, when the routine feels easy and comfortable. There is no rush.

Keep track

Tick a box each day you do your routine.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 1							
Week 2							
Week 3							
Week 4							

Get urgent help first, and do not exercise, if you have any of these

Call 999 straight away if neck pain comes with any of these. They can be signs of a stroke, meningitis or another emergency.

- Sudden severe headache unlike any you have had before
- Dizziness with double vision, slurred speech, facial droop, difficulty swallowing or weakness in an arm or leg
- Neck stiffness with a high temperature, severe headache, rash or dislike of bright light

See your GP promptly, or call NHS 111, if

- Neck pain after a significant fall, accident or blow
- Numbness, tingling or weakness spreading into the arms or hands
- Unexplained weight loss or a history of cancer with new neck pain

Stop these exercises if

- If any neck exercise makes you dizzy, or brings on pins and needles or arm symptoms, stop and speak to your GP.
- If you are not improving after about 4 weeks, or things are getting worse sooner, get it checked. A GP, physiotherapist or osteopath can assess what is going on and adjust your exercises.

Want your problem assessed?

If you would like your symptoms assessed, you are welcome to book an appointment with Lance Peterson Osteopathy in Chichester: lancepetersonosteopathy.co.uk/book.html · 07899 358698. Osteopathic care is not right for everyone, and if something needs medical attention first, you will be told.

The full plain-English guide, with the common questions and sources, is at:

lancepetersonosteopathy.co.uk/guide/swimmers-neck-and-upper-back-pain.html

Based on

The exercises are described in my own words from these NHS and Chartered Society of Physiotherapy resources. Repeats and holds are kept to the gentle, beginner end of the ranges they give. Links were checked in October 2026.

- University Hospitals Sussex NHS Trust: Self treatment of acute neck pain (2025)
<https://www.uhsussex.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2174.1-Self-treatment-of-acute-neck-pain-2025.pdf>
- Cambridge University Hospitals NHS: Thoracic spine exercises
<https://www.cuh.nhs.uk/patient-information/thoracic-spine-exercises/>
- NHS Lothian Physiotherapy: Back pain with leg pain pack and back exercises
<https://services.nhslothian.scot/wp-content/uploads/sites/63/2022/09/NHS-Lothian-Back-Pain-with-Leg-Pain-Pack.pdf>