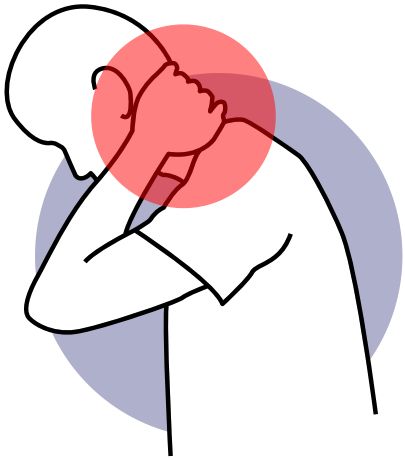
A Lifestyle Medicine Approach to Chronic Neck Pain



Chronic neck pain is a growing issue for many people, particularly in the rise of home working and dependency on technical devices. Sometimes referred to as 'tech neck' for this reason, it commonly occurs in those who use devices such as mobiles, tablets and laptops. It's a complex condition that can also be brought on by illness or injury.

Though quite literally a pain in the neck, there are lifestyle changes you can make which can improve life for those living with this condition.

Assess your workspace



We spend one third of our lives at work. For those office based or working from home, this means one third of our lives - at least - sat in front of a computer screen.

Making sure our workspace is ergonomic and supports a healthy posture could help improve neck pain.[1] Monitors should be at eye level, whether you're sitting or using a standing desk. You can also hold your phone or use a headset rather than putting your phone between your ear and shoulder to hold it in place.

Consider your sleeping position

Sleeping in an awkward position can cause or worsen neck pain. Neck pain can in turn prevent you from getting a good night's sleep.

Sleeping on your back or on your side are considered to be the best positions to support your neck.[2] You may find you would benefit from a rounded pillow to support the curve of your neck, or looking into using a special 'memory foam' pillow which will conform to your body.

Stay hydrated



We all know drinking water is good for us, but few people realise that maintaining the health and mobility of your spine is one of the benefits of staying hydrated.

Your intervertebral discs are comprised of 70%-90% water, and studies show the ability of these discs to absorb shock, maintain height, and prevent nerve compression is improved by drinking enough water to be adequately hydrated.[3]

References:

1. How poor posture causes neck pain. Spine Health.
2. Say "good night" to neck pain. Harvard Health Publishing.
3. Bezci SE, Nandy A, O'Connell GD. Effect of Hydration on Healthy Intervertebral Disk Mechanical Stiffness. J Biomech Eng. 2015 Oct

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Keep moving



Gentle exercise, such as Pilates or yoga, can help ease stiffness and pain in your neck.[4] Other gentle exercises such as chair based exercises, stretching, walking, cycling and swimming can help relieve stress, which in turn can help with neck tension.

Your GP or physiotherapist can provide you with safe, recommended activities that you can do to help neck pain and strengthen your neck muscles to prevent further instances from occurring.



Manage stress

When we're stressed, our bodies can hold it in our neck and shoulder muscles. This can be worse for those with chronic neck pain.

While we know avoiding stress isn't always possible, we can try to reduce how it affects us and therefore reduce the effect it has.

Minimise technology use



As we've already touched on, staring down at something, whether it's a smartphone, tablet or another gadget, can put strain on the muscles in your neck as well as the muscles in your spine.[5]

The best way to combat this is to lift or hold your device at eye level. You should also try to minimise the use of any technology that puts a strain on your neck in this way, which can be done by setting daily limits and sticking to these wherever possible.

References:

4. Uluğ N, Yılmaz ÖT, Kara M, Özçakar L. Effects of Pilates and yoga in patients with chronic neck pain: A sonographic study. J Rehabil Med. 2018 Jan
5. Chen YJ, Hu CY, Wu WT, Lee RP, Peng CH, Yao TK, Chang CM, Chen HW, Yeh KT. Association of smartphone overuse and neck pain: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Postgrad Med J. 2025 Jun

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