

[IMAGE]

Deal With Neck and Back Pain Effectively

By Perry Nickelston, DC, FMS, SFMA

We've all had episodes of neck and/or back pain that takes us down for the count. Pain that strikes with such quickness it can bring you to your knees. Experiencing neck or back pain is a part of life, there is no escaping it. However, that does not mean you must remain powerless and suffer on a daily basis with either condition. There is no cure for back and neck pain; only management. A cure implies you will never experience another painful episode and that is unrealistic. Managing pain on the other hand is where you can most assuredly take control and empower yourself to live without pain. By implementing simple and effective daily strategies you can eliminate many of the causative factors of common musculoskeletal pain conditions.

What is pain? Simply stated, it is a warning signal from the body that something is wrong. Pain perception originates in the brain when it receives a signal from your nervous system that something is dysfunctional. Pain may either be from macro-traumatic onsets such as slips, falls, accidents, etc., or micro-traumatic causes like poor posture, occupational injuries, muscle imbalances, tightness, stiffness and lack of flexibility. Once pain occurs, your brain goes into survival mode by making compensation movement patterns to avoid further pain. The brain wants to avoid pain at all costs and it does so by taking the path of least resistance. Meaning, your muscles, joints, ligaments, and soft tissue adapt to avoid pain. You end up getting caught in compensations of dysfunctional movement resulting in pain on a daily basis. The first reaction is to stop the pain with medication. Pain relief medication has its place during the healing process; however it can give you a false sense of resolution and may be highly addictive. Once you stop taking the medication the pain often returns with more intensity. Medication should always be taken under medical doctor supervision and ideally used in conjunction with a corrective therapeutic program.

neck and back pain - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark The sedentary lifestyle of our culture breeds movement dysfunction and poor postural habits. Constantly sitting compresses the lower back, tightens up your hips decreasing their ability to move efficiently. Rounded shoulders and forward weight of the head increases tension in the neck and upper back. The constant flexed forward posture leads to increased stiffness and tightness in the front of the body with weakness decreased support in the back. The old adage,

“If you don’t use it, you lose it” rings true. The lack of use in bigger support muscles of the hips, shoulders, and buttocks makes the body vulnerable to injury and pain.

What are some of the most effective pain relief methods today? If you experience neck or back pain on a daily basis it is highly recommended to seek care from a qualified health professional. Experts in musculoskeletal injuries include; therapeutic medical massage, chiropractic, physical therapy, orthopedics, physiatrist, and corrective exercise specialist. Very effective, simple and safe self help strategies can help you recover faster. Try these four exercises and movements on a daily basis and notice how much better you feel.

1. Roll a golf ball on the bottom of both bare feet for 3-5 minutes per day. You can do this sitting at your desk, watching television at night, or while standing at the sink brushing your teeth before bed. The self massage releases tension in tight connective tissue on the bottom of the foot that can affect posture and tension in the lower back and head. You may notice a reduction in lower back pain and neck pain after a single application.
2. Massage the soft tissue and muscles below your collar bone and closest to the shoulder called your pectorals. These are often tight and restricted from the rounded poor posture causing tension in the neck and shoulders. Massage each side for 2-minutes with your fingers. It can be quite uncomfortable in the beginning, but will improve with more effort and attention. This a very powerful acupressure release point for tension.
3. Stand with heels together toes turned out, tall spine upright posture with your arms one foot from each side palms of the hands turned out as far as you can. Contract and squeeze your legs, buttocks, mid back, rear shoulders as hard as you can for five seconds controlling your breath. Do not hold your breath. Repeat five times. This opens up your tight anterior body and strengthens the weaker back.
4. Massage the back of your neck and then flex (bend) your head forward trying to touch chin to chest. Put the palm of your hand against your forehead and apply light pressure trying to push your head away from your chin. Resist the movement for five seconds and relax. Repeat three times. This strengthens the weaker neck muscles in the front to relax the tight ones in back.

During these movements you should not feel any pain.

You can take back control of your life from pain with simple daily activities and communicating progress with your health professional. The rule of thumb in any rehabilitation program is go at your own pace and

build your tolerance up slowly the body will adapt positively to a well designed program. Make sure to talk to your chiropractor about how to effectively manage the pain you might be in.

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