

Neck Protection Advice for Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis

Patient Information

Physiotherapy Service



The Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website is available on the link:
<https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets> or scan the QR code.

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Advice

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic systemic inflammatory disease that primarily affects the joints. Although inflammatory arthritis of the small joints in the hands and feet is a common symptom, the cervical spine can also be affected.

Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis are advised to avoid excessive strain on the neck that occurs when bending the head forwards or looking down. We suggest the following to prevent this:

- Avoid letting your head droop forward for example, if you are reading you could support your book on a cushion or read a newspaper at a table to avoid looking down for prolonged periods of time
- Keep your head up as much as possible and be aware of your neck position and posture
- When carrying shopping ensure that you do not use a straight arm but distribute the weight on your forearm by using a bent elbow. Try to distribute the load evenly by using both arms.
- Do not roll your head around.
- Try to avoid quick movements especially when turning your head.
- Try to sleep as flat as you can. The contents of the pillow should be adjustable to provide appropriate support for your neck. Ideally try to have your shoulders on the bed with the support from the pillow maintaining your head in a neutral position. Do not sleep face down, as this places greater strain on your neck.
- Do not lie in the bath for any length of time as this also bends your neck forwards excessively

Maintenance of good posture

Posture relates to the position of your body at any time during the day or night. It is important to maintain your body's natural curves whatever activity you are performing. The position that you adopt affects the position of your spine. Poor posture will be detrimental to the ultimate position of your spine.

Try to sit correctly by pushing your bottom to the back of the chair and try to maintain the curves in your back and neck. A small cushion placed in the small of your back will help to encourage this. When standing, try to look straight ahead and maintain your spinal curves.

Use of collars

- Collars can provide an excellent means of support for your neck and could be worn if you are experiencing an increase in neck pain or when doing activities that lead to neck pain.
- It is important to only wear the collar for short periods periodically throughout the day. Your physiotherapist will advise you on this.
- For some people, it may also be advisable to sleep in a soft collar. Your physiotherapist will advise you on this.

If you are using a collar and have any concerns, please contact the Physiotherapy Department at Wrightington Hospital, telephone 01257 256305.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends, and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am until 4pm)

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Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the positives and negatives of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use, and store the information we hold about you, please see patient information leaflet, Ref. **Corp 006** How we use your information, this can be found on the Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website, see details on the front cover.

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille, and other languages upon request. For more information, please ask in the department/ward.

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