

# Neck and Upper Back Exercises - Level 2

## Patient Information

Musculoskeletal (MSK) Physiotherapy Services



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.

Author ID: GE  
Leaflet Ref: Tpy 024  
Version: 2  
Leaflet title: Neck and Upper Back Exercises Level 2  
Date Produced: January 2024  
Expiry Date: January 2026

## Disclaimer

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone and while every precaution was taken in selecting these exercises, they do not come without risks. If you have any concerns regarding injury, or whether or not you undertake any of the exercises, then you should consult your General Practitioner (GP) or Physiotherapist prior to commencing any exercises shown here.

It is quite normal to feel some discomfort following exercise, but it is important that this discomfort eases within 2 hours of finishing the exercise and doesn't have an overall negative effect on your symptoms.

The exercise plans shown here are designed to be used as a guide and a point of reference, they are not exhaustive and can be modified and progressed under the supervision of your physiotherapist.

## Instructions

Aim to do the exercise plan 3 to 4 times per week, with at least 1 day off in between to allow for recovery.

Each exercise is repeated a number of times (for example, 5 or 10 times) to build up strength and flexibility. The repetitions make a 'set'.

The number of repetitions is a guide and can be increased or decreased according to pain levels. If the exercise causes pain that lasts for more than 2 hours after finishing the exercise, then decrease the repetitions.

Complete each exercise slowly and in a controlled manner, you should take your time and not rush. Take 30 seconds rest in between each set.

**Contact the Physio department if you find the exercises are making your pain worse overall.**

## Contact Information

### Leigh Health Centre

Telephone: 0300 707 1597  
wwl-tr.leighphysio@nhs.net

### Platt Bridge Health Centre

Telephone: 0300 707 1772  
wwl-tr.mskphysio-bostonhouse@nhs.net




### Wigan Health Centre, Boston House

Telephone: 0300 707 1113  
Wwl-tr.mskphysio-bostonhouse@nhs.net

### Therapy Department- Wrightington Hospital

Telephone: 01257 256305  
Wwl-tr.therapyadmin@nhs.net

## Neck and Upper Back Level 2 – Exercises 1 to 12

	<p><b>1. Flexions</b></p> <p>Stand or sit.</p> <p>Clasp your hands behind your head. While breathing out, let the weight of your arms stretch neck and upper trunk downwards.</p> <p>Hold stretching for approx. 5 secs.</p> <p>Repeat 5 times. Sets 2.</p> <p>Stop if the exercise makes you feel dizzy or unwell.</p>
	<p><b>2. Extensions</b></p> <p>Sit with your hands behind your head.</p> <p>Bend your head backwards as far as is comfortable.</p> <p>Hold for approx. 5 secs.</p> <p>Repeat 5 times. Sets 2.</p> <p>Stop if the exercise makes you feel dizzy or unwell.</p>
	<p><b>3. Side Flexions</b></p> <p>Sit upright.</p> <p>Tilt your head toward one shoulder until you feel the stretch on the opposite side. Using your hand gently pull your head further to the side.</p> <p>Hold for approx. 5 secs. Repeat to other side.</p> <p>Repeat 5 times each side. Sets 2.</p> <p>Stop if the exercise makes you feel dizzy or unwell.</p>



#### 4. Rotations

Sit upright.

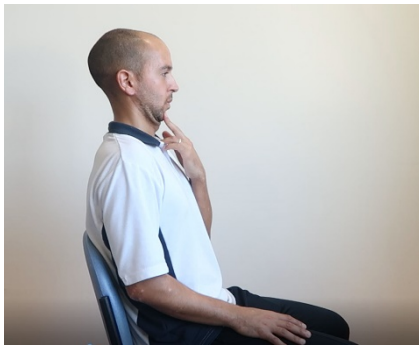
Turn your head to one side until you feel a stretch. Using your hand gently push your head further round.

Hold for approx. 5 secs. Repeat to other side.

Repeat 5 times each side.

Sets 2.

Stop if the exercise makes you feel dizzy or unwell.



#### 5. Retractions

Sit straight-backed.

Pull your chin in. At the end position push your chin carefully further backwards with your fingers.

Hold for 5 seconds and feel the stretch in your neck.

Repeat 5 times.

Sets 2.

Stop if the exercise makes you feel dizzy or unwell.



#### 6. Cat & Camel

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

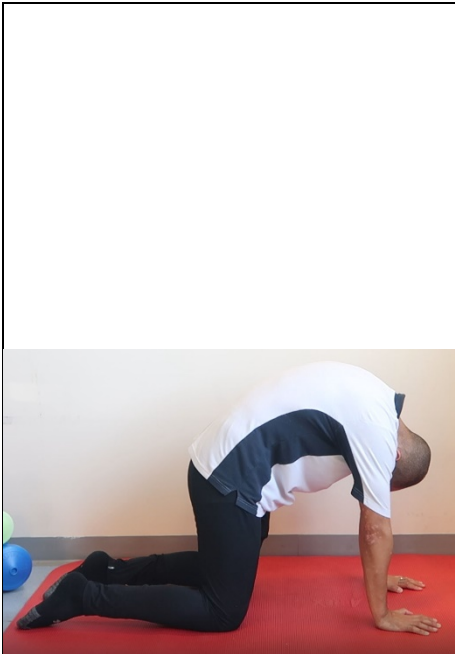
Hollow and then arch your back by tilting your pelvis backwards and forwards.

The movement can be enhanced by lifting your head as high as possible when hollowing your back and tucking your head between your shoulders when you arch your back.

Hold each position for a couple of seconds only.

Repeat 10 times in each direction.

Sets 2.



Stop if the exercise makes you feel dizzy or unwell.



### 7. Thoracic Spine Rotation/"Thread the needle"

On all fours, put your hands under your shoulders and knees under your hips. Keep your spine in a neutral position.

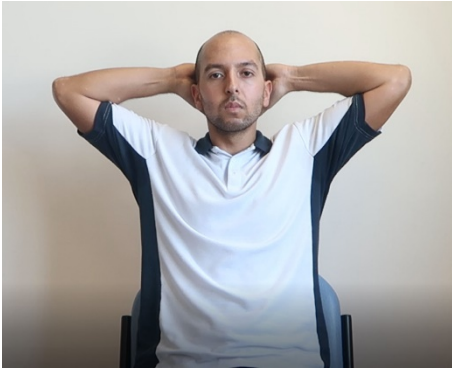
Reach one arm under the other armpit and then bring the arm back and reach towards the ceiling.

Note: Focus on the movement from your upper back.

Repeat 10 times to each direction.  
Sets 2.

Stop if the exercise makes you feel dizzy or unwell.





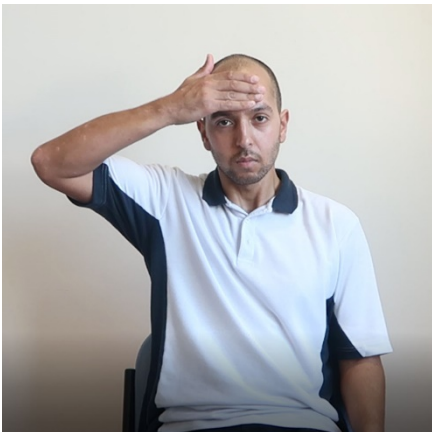
### **8. Resisted Extensions**

Sit upright.

Try to bend your head backwards while resisting the movement with your hand(s).

Hold approx. 5 secs.

Repeat 5 times.  
Sets 3..



### **9. Resisted Flexions**

Sit upright.

Try to bend your head forward while resisting the movement with your hand(s).

Hold approx. 5 secs.

Repeat 5 times.  
Sets 3.



### **10. Resisted Side Rotations**

Sit upright.

Try to turn your head to one side while resisting the movement with your hand.

Hold approx. 5 secs. Repeat on the other side.

Repeat 5 times each side.  
Sets 3.



### **11. Resisted Side Flexions**

Sit upright.

Tilt your head to one side while resisting the movement with your hand.

Hold approx. 5 secs. Repeat to other side.

Repeat 5 times to each side.  
Sets 3.



### **12. Scapula Retraction**

Lying face down, put your arms by your side.

A rolled-up towel can be placed under your forehead for comfort.

Lift your upper trunk off the floor and pull your shoulder blades together.

Look down at the floor while doing the exercise.

Hold 5 seconds.

Repeat 5 times.  
Sets 3.

Please use this space to write notes or reminders.



---

## 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)

The Patient Relations/PALS Manager  
Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary  
Wigan Lane  
Wigan  
WN1 2NN

---

## 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.

---

© Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.  
All rights reserved. Not to be reproduced in whole or in part without the permission of the copyright owner.

**Call 111 first when it's less urgent than 999.**



EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

GOLD AWARD 2021

*Proudly serving those who serve.*

Phone: 0808 802 1212

Text: 81212

[www.veteransgateway.org.uk](http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk)

