POST-CONCUSSION NECK CARE GUIDE



7 Gentle Moves and Everyday Habits
to Ease Neck Tension During Your Recovery

A Free Guide from the team at Back To Health Clinics

Before you start:

- Get checked first. Only start these moves after a healthcare provider has evaluated your head injury and said gentle neck movement is okay for you.
- Stay in a comfortable range. Every movement should feel easy. You should feel a mild stretch at most, never pain.
- Stop if your symptoms flare. If any move brings on or worsens headache, dizziness, nausea, vision changes, or numbness or tingling in your arms, stop and check in with your provider.
- Go slowly. No bouncing, jerking or fast movements. Breathe normally throughout.
- Know the danger signs. Call 911 or go to the emergency department right away for a headache that gets worse and does not go away; weakness, numbness, decreased coordination, convulsions or seizures; repeated vomiting; slurred speech or unusual behavior; one pupil larger than the other; confusion, restlessness or agitation; or loss of consciousness, extreme drowsiness or being unable to wake up. (Source: CDC)

BTH Back To Health Chiropractic

Movement #1

Belly Breathing Reset



What it helps:

Relaxes the neck and shoulder muscles that tend to tighten up when you're tense or in pain. It also makes a calm way to start.

How to do it:

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent, or sit back in a supported chair.
2. Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly.
3. Breathe in slowly through your nose so your belly rises and your chest stays mostly still.
4. Breathe out slowly through your mouth and let your shoulders soften.

Starting dose:

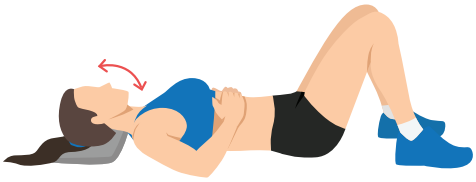
5 to 8 slow breaths..

Tip:

If your shoulders rise toward your ears when you breathe in, slow down and let your belly do the work.

Movement #2

Lying Chin Nod



What it helps:

Gently wakes up the deep muscles at the front of the neck that help support your head, with no strain on the rest of the neck.

How to do it:

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent and your head resting on a thin pillow or folded towel.
2. Keeping the back of your head on the pillow, make a tiny "yes" nod, as if bringing your chin slightly toward your throat.
3. Hold gently, then relax

Starting dose:

Hold 5 seconds, repeat 8 to 10 times.

Tip:

This is a very small movement. If the muscles at the front of your neck pop out or your jaw clenches, use less effort.

Movement #3

Seated Chin Tuck

What it helps:

Counters the forward-head posture that builds up during long stretches of screen time or rest.



How to do it:

1. Sit tall with your feet flat and your shoulders relaxed.
2. Look straight ahead and gently glide your head straight back, making a slight "double chin." Keep your eyes level; don't tip your head up or down.
3. Hold briefly, then return to neutral

Starting dose:

Hold 3 to 5 seconds, repeat 8 to 10 times.

Tip:

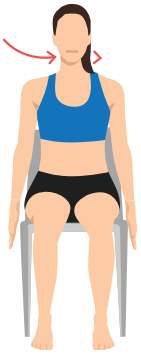
Imagine a string gently lifting the top of your head toward the ceiling.

Movement #4

Gentle Neck Turns

What it helps:

Keeps the neck moving within a comfortable range, which can ease stiffness.



How to do it:

1. Sit tall with your shoulders relaxed.
2. Slowly turn your head to look over one shoulder, only as far as is comfortable.
3. Pause briefly, return to center, then turn to the other side.

Starting dose:

5 slow turns each way.

Tip:

Turning your head can bring on dizziness for some people after a concussion. Move slowly, keep your eyes on a fixed point if that helps, and stop if you feel dizzy.

Movement #5

Upper Trapezius Stretch



What it helps:

Eases tension in the muscle that runs from the side of the neck to the top of the shoulder.

How to do it:

1. Sit tall and hold the edge of your chair with your right hand to keep that shoulder down.
2. Slowly tip your left ear toward your left shoulder until you feel a gentle stretch along the right side of your neck.
3. Hold, breathing normally, then slowly return to center. Switch sides.

Starting dose:

Hold 20 to 30 seconds, 2 times each side.

Tip:

Don't pull on your head with your hand. Let gravity do the work.

Movement #6

Shoulder Blade Squeeze



What it helps:

Builds posture support through the upper back so the neck doesn't have to work as hard

How to do it:

1. Sit or stand tall with your arms relaxed at your sides.
2. Gently draw your shoulder blades back and down, as if tucking them into your back pockets.
3. Hold, then relax.

Starting dose:

Hold 5 seconds, repeat 10 times.

Tip:

Keep your shoulders away from your ears and your chin level.

Movement #7

Towel Rest for the Base of the Skull



What it helps:

Lets the small muscles just below the skull relax, which can feel good when headaches start at the back of the head.

How to do it:

1. Roll a small hand towel into a firm roll about 2 to 3 inches thick.
2. Lie on your back and place the roll under the base of your skull, where your head meets your neck.
3. Let your head rest heavy and breathe slowly.

Starting dose:

1 to 3 minutes.

Tip:

It should feel like gentle, comfortable pressure. If it causes pain, tingling or dizziness, remove the towel.

At-Home Care

Tips

These everyday habits are meant to reduce strain on the neck while you recover. They aren't a substitute for your provider's concussion plan. Follow your provider's guidance on screens, school, work and exercise.

- **Raise your screen.** Bring your monitor, laptop or phone up toward eye level so you're not looking down for long periods.
- **Take movement breaks.** Every 30 to 45 minutes of sitting or screen time, stand up, roll your shoulders and do a few chin tucks.
- **Support your sleep.** Choose a pillow that keeps your head level with your spine, whether you sleep on your back or side. Stomach sleeping twists the neck.
- **Pace your day.** Spread demanding tasks out, and rest before symptoms build rather than after.
- **Return to activity the way your provider recommends.** Gentle, gradual activity that stays below the point where symptoms flare is part of modern concussion care, but your provider should guide when and how you start.
- **Leave eye and balance exercises to your provider.** Exercises for dizziness and vision work best when a provider chooses them for you, because the right exercise depends on what's causing the symptom.
- **Don't self-crack your neck.** Quick, forceful twisting can irritate a neck that's still healing.
- **Track your symptoms.** Jot down your headache, dizziness, neck pain and brain fog each day, along with what helped or made things worse. Bring it to your appointments.

Still not feeling like yourself?

Lingering headaches, dizziness and neck stiffness after a concussion can have a neck component that's worth a closer look. Our team works alongside your physician to evaluate the neck side of your recovery and build a gentle plan around you. We don't treat the brain injury itself. We focus on the neck injury that can come with it.

Schedule your post-concussion evaluation at bthclinics.com/locations

Schedule Your Evaluation Today

Three convenient Michigan locations:

Call us:

- **Zeeland/Holland:** 616.546.3500
- **Portage:** 269.345.2273
- **Muskegon:** 231.830.1111

Online scheduling: https://bthclinics.com/locations

Most patients can be seen within 24-48 hours

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