



Patient & Family Guide  
2026

# Exercises After Neck Surgery



[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# Exercises After Neck Surgery

The exercises in this pamphlet will help you improve the range of motion (ROM) and strength in your neck and shoulder muscles after your neck surgery.

Your physiotherapist will go over the exercises that you should do, with you.

## Remember these tips when exercising:

- Start with and keep good posture throughout the exercise. Keep your head and shoulders in line and your chin tucked in.
- **Do not exercise past the point of discomfort. You should feel a comfortable stretch with no pain.** Let pain be your guide.
- Keep doing these exercises until your neck and shoulder movements and strength are back to normal.
- **If you are having radiation:**
  - › You can lose ROM in your shoulder and neck. As tissue heals from radiation, it can get tight.
  - › While having radiation, do the exercises 2 times a day. Keep doing the exercises for 2 months after your last radiation treatment.

## Neck ROM exercises

You can start these exercises as soon as your neck staples and drains are taken out, or as told by your physiotherapist.

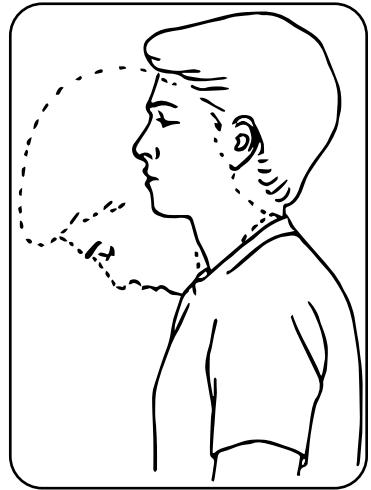
### Starting position

Sit upright, with your neck supported, chin tucked, and shoulders relaxed.

**If an exercise causes dizziness, stop doing the exercise** and tell your doctor and/or physiotherapist.

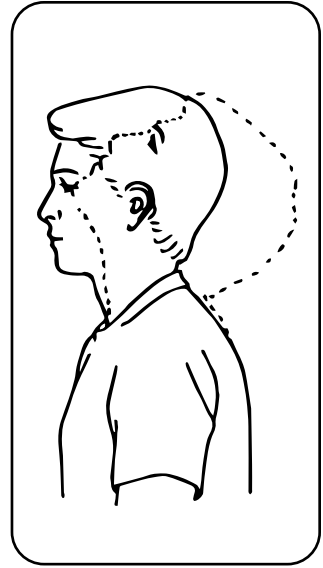
### 1. Neck flexion

- › Bring your chin down towards your chest until you feel a comfortable stretch in the back of your neck.
- › Hold for 15 to 30 seconds.
- › Return to starting position.
- › Repeat 3 to 5 times.
- › Do 3 sessions a day.



## 2. Neck extension

- › Look up towards the ceiling until you feel a comfortable stretch in the front of your neck.
- › Hold for 15 to 30 seconds.
- › Return to starting position.
- › Repeat 3 to 5 times.
- › Do 3 sessions a day.



## 3. Neck rotation

- › Turn your head to 1 side until you feel a comfortable stretch in the side of your neck.
- › Hold for 15 to 30 seconds.
- › Return to starting position.
- › Repeat on the other side.
- › Repeat 3 to 5 times.
- › Do 3 sessions a day.



#### 4. Neck side bend

- › Bring your right ear towards your right shoulder until you feel a comfortable stretch in the left side of your neck. **Do not turn your head.** Keep looking straight ahead.
- › Hold for 15 to 30 seconds.
- › Return to starting position.
- › Repeat on left side.
- › Repeat 3 to 5 times.
- › Do 3 sessions a day.

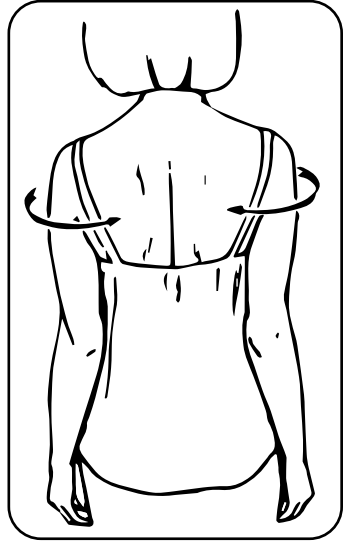


# Shoulder exercises

Start these as told by your physiotherapist.

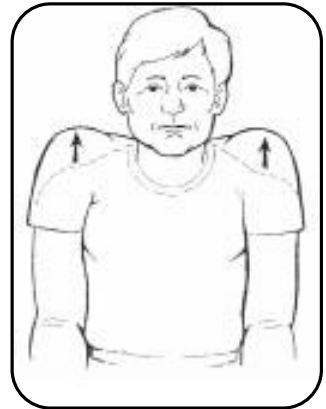
## 1. Shoulder blades squeeze

- › While sitting, keep your arms by your sides. Move your shoulder blades together as shown.
- › Hold for 5 seconds.
- › Return to starting position.
- › Repeat 5 times.
- › Do 3 sessions a day.



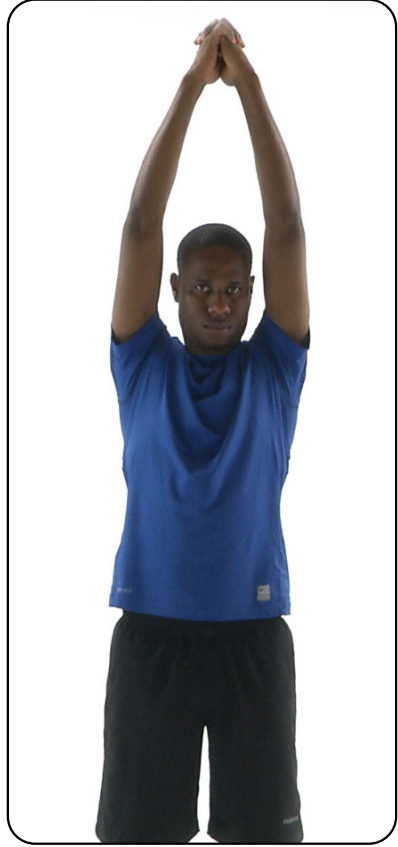
## 2. Shoulder shrugs

- › Start with your shoulders relaxed.
- › Slowly lift your shoulders up towards your ears.
- › Return to starting position.
- › Repeat 5 to 10 times.
- › Do 3 sessions a day.



### 3. Assisted shoulder flexion

- › Clasp your hands in front of you.
- › Lift your arms up over your head.
- › Use your strong arm to help your weaker arm.
- › Repeat 5 to 10 times.
- › Do 3 sessions a day.



#### 4. Wall walking: forward

- › Stand facing a wall.
- › Place the finger tips of your affected arm on the wall.
- › Use your fingers to climb up the wall until you feel a comfortable stretch.
- › Hold for 15 to 30 seconds.
- › Slide your fingers slowly down the wall.
- › Repeat 3 to 5 times.
- › Do 3 sessions a day.



## 5. Wall walking: sideways

- › Stand beside a wall.
- › Place the finger tips of your affected arm on the wall.
- › Use your fingers to climb up the wall until you feel a comfortable stretch.
- › Hold for 15 to 30 seconds.
- › Slide your fingers slowly down the wall.
- › Repeat 3 to 5 times.
- › Do 3 sessions a day.





## Notes:

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This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:  
[www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources)

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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