



## **9 Simple and Effective Ways**

to Stop Neck and Shoulder Pain – from disturbing your sleep and causing headaches

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### **1. Use Ice for Acute Neck Pain and Heat for Stiffness**

Ice is recommended for the first 3-5 days after an injury or exacerbation of pain. However, it can be useful for up to a week after these acute incidents. Ice can also be used after a busy day or after a workout and should be applied for 10 minutes at the painful site.

And when to use heat - my advice would be to apply a hotpack in the morning when your neck and shoulder are feeling more stiff, than painful.

### **2. Avoid Reading or Texting in Bed for Greater Than 20 Minutes**

Lying in bed with several pillows propping you up can cause excessive neck flexion as you look down at your book, tablet or phone. This causes increased strain and tension on the muscles and bones of the neck. Even worse is that at the end of the day, the muscles and tissue are the weakest from fighting gravity all day. So avoid text neck!

### **3. Sleep With One Firm Pillow, not two**

Sleeping with two pillows causes excessive strain and tension on the neck for the duration of your sleep. Using one pillow can decrease this strain and stress by putting your neck in a more neutral position. Frequent headaches, migraines and shoulder tension are a sign of spending 8 hours every night in a poor position in bed. This is the easiest change you can make tonight!

### **4. Avoid Carrying Your Bag or Purse Only On One Side**

For this, you're going to need to completely "flip" everything you've likely done for years when it comes to carrying bags, as this is one of the most common things that causes neck and shoulder tension. When you carry a bag on one side exclusively, the weight is not evenly distributed. This causes one side of your body to work harder than the other to try to compensate. So switch it up!

### **5. Avoid Sleeping on Your Stomach**

Sleeping on your back is the most recommended position for neck or shoulder pain. Side sleeping with one pillow between your knees is the second most recommended position. Sleeping on your stomach places your neck and shoulders in poor postures for extended periods of time and should be avoided like the plague.

### **6. Strengthen Your Upper And Middle Back**

When your shoulder muscles and upper and middle back muscles are strong your head and neck posture will improve significantly. However, if you sit or stand with rounded shoulders it won't matter how strong your muscles are because you will experience pain from poor posture. So sit up tall on your "sit bones".

### **7. Relax your Trunk and Shoulders and Don't Hold Your Breath**

Holding your breath due to pain can lead to increased tension and pain of the neck and shoulders. So it's important to relax and implement proper breathing when performing functional tasks like getting up from a chair, lifting, pushing and pulling to name a few.

### **8. Ensure Laptop Screen Is Set At The Right Height**

When your laptop or computer monitor isn't at the right height you are putting excessive force on your spine. It is important to set up the screen so that it is at eye level. This will help reduce the strain on your neck and shoulder muscles.

### **9. See a Physiotherapist**

Free yourself with Physiotherapy! There's no better way to get rid of neck and shoulder pain for good than working with a physiotherapist. Physiotherapists that specialize in hands-on treatments adapted to your needs can send you home feeling relaxed, free from stiffness and pain - all without having to go see your doctor or revert to taking pills!

### **Conclusion**

So there you have it! **9 things that you can do today to improve posture, general health, and alleviate back pain and stiffness.** Apply these fundamentals to your daily routine and it will make a difference in your quality of life.

I hope this is the beginning of a great, long-term relationship where myself and my team at Cabot Physiotherapy become the source of leading-edge health advice for you (and your family) and make a real difference to the quality and enjoyment of your life.

We love questions! So feel free to call us, or use our online forms to submit your questions. Visit [www.cabotphysio.ca](http://www.cabotphysio.ca)

**Note:** Not all physiotherapists are the same, as some do not and will not provide you with the hands on type of treatment that you need to end pain as fast as you would hope. Disappointing, but true.