

Neck pain is a common issue that can affect people of all ages and lifestyles. Up to 80% of people will experience neck pain in their lifetime. It can result from various causes, including poor posture, muscle strains, or underlying medical conditions. This handout aims to provide you with essential information about neck pain and how to effectively manage it.

### **Types of Neck Pain:**

- Acute neck Pain: Typically lasts for a few days to a few weeks and is often caused by muscle strains or sprains.
- Chronic neck Pain: Persists for 12 weeks or longer and may be related to more serious underlying conditions.

### **Common Causes of Neck Pain:**

- Muscle Strain: Overexertion, poor posture, or sudden movements can strain neck muscles.
- Herniated Disc: When the discs between the neck vertebrae rupture or bulge, it can press on nearby nerves.
- Arthritis: Conditions like osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis can affect the neck joints.
- Whiplash: Typically caused by car accidents, it involves sudden neck movements.
- Stress: Emotional tension can lead to muscle tension and neck pain.
- Poor Ergonomics: Incorrect workstation setup or sleeping positions can strain the neck.

### **Symptoms:**

- Pain or discomfort in the neck or shoulders
- Stiffness and limited range of motion
- Headaches, often originating from neck tension
- Numbness, tingling, or weakness in the arms
- Radiating pain into the upper back or arms

### **Prevention and Management:**

- **Posture Correction:** Maintain good posture when sitting, standing, and using electronic devices.
- **Ergonomics:** Ensure your work environment and furniture support a healthy neck position.
- **Exercise:** Gentle neck stretches and strengthening exercises can improve flexibility and reduce tension.
- **Stress Management:** Relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing and mindfulness, can help.
- **Proper Pillow:** Use a pillow that supports the natural curve of your neck when sleeping.
- **Regular Breaks:** Take short breaks from activities that strain the neck, like prolonged computer work.
- **Heat Therapy:** Apply heat to the neck to relax muscles and increase blood flow.
- **Pain Medication:** Over-the-counter pain relievers or prescription medications may be necessary.

### **When to Seek Professional Help:**

If you experience any of the following, it is recommended to consult a healthcare professional:

- Severe or persistent pain
- Numbness or weakness in the arms or hands
- Difficulty swallowing or breathing
- Signs of infection (redness, warmth, fever)

### **Treatment Options:**

- **Physiotherapy:** Customised exercises and techniques to improve neck strength and mobility.
- **Medications:** Pain relievers, anti-inflammatories, or muscle relaxants as prescribed.
- **Injections:** Corticosteroid injections can reduce inflammation and pain.
- **Surgery:** For severe cases when other treatments fail, surgery may be considered.