

NECK STRETCHES

Created by BackTalk SSG (Lauren Leopold, OTDS)



THINGS TO CONSIDER

Disclaimer: When starting a new routine, it is advised to consult with your healthcare provider. The following stretches are not scoliosis specific but are stretches that I have found I can still perform despite my scoliosis. These stretches work for myself and my body but please keep in mind that everyone is different; what works for myself may or may not work for you.

How many should I do?

When beginning these stretches, hold the stretch for 5-10 seconds on each side. In the beginning, you may want to start with 1-2 sets to make sure they do not aggravate your muscles or increase pain. As your muscles loosen and lengthen and you become more comfortable with the stretches, you can increase the amount of time you hold the stretch (15-30 seconds) and/or the amount of sets you perform (3-5 sets). If pain increases, stop the stretch immediately and consult your healthcare provider.

When performing stretches, it is important to maintain proper positioning during the stretch. Most of the following stretches can be performed standing or sitting with your back straight and shoulders relaxed (shoulders should be down, not shrugged up towards your ears which can unconsciously occur).

In addition, remember to continue to breathe through the stretch and do not hold your breath (some people do this unconsciously). Your breathing should be slow and steady; breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth while performing the stretch.



LATERAL NECK FLEXION

Slowly bend the head to one side, bringing the ear as close to the shoulder as possible. Keep your shoulders and back in place and relaxed (make sure your shoulders are down, not up by the ears). Bend as far as you can comfortably and start by holding the stretch for 5 seconds, return to neutral position, and repeat on the opposite side. You should feel this stretch right along the side of the neck.

To feel a deeper stretch, you can gently pull on your neck. When bending your neck to the left side, place your left hand on top of your head, gently pull your left ear further towards your shoulder. Pull until you feel a deeper stretch but no pain. Hold for 5 seconds, return to beginning position, and repeat on the opposite side.

NECK ROTATION

Slowly turn your head to one side as far as you can to feel a slight pull in your neck but no pain. Once you have reached your stopping point, hold for 5 seconds, return to beginning position, and repeat on the other side.



45 DEGREE DIAGONAL STRETCH

Begin this stretch by turning your head to one side (about a 45 degree angle). Next, slowly bend your head down so your chin goes towards your chest. You will feel this stretch in a slightly different place than the neck rotation stretch alone. Hold for 5 seconds and repeat on the other side.



Modification 1:

When performing this stretch to the left side, place your left hand on top of your head. Use your left hand to gently pull your head downwards closer to your chest. You will feel this in a slightly different location in your neck and the stretch should feel deeper but not painful. Hold for 5 seconds and repeat on the other side.



Modification 2:

When performing this stretch to the left side, place your right hand on the small of your back (your lower back) with your palm facing outwards. Then complete the diagonal neck stretch as previously described. By adding your opposite hand to the small of your back, you should feel a slightly different pull in the muscle. Hold for 5 seconds and repeat on the opposite side.



References:

Myler, Z. (2019, September 14). 4 easy stretches for a stiff neck. <https://www.spine-health.com/wellness/exercise/4-easy-stretches-stiff-neck>

