

Patient information factsheet

Exercises after having head and neck free flap surgery

We have given you this factsheet because you have had head and neck free flap surgery. This factsheet contains some exercises to do to help improve your range of movement after your surgery. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our head and neck therapy team using the details at the end of this factsheet.

Why do I need to do these exercises?

These exercises are designed to help with your recovery after having head and neck free flap surgery. They focus on improving your range of movement (the extent or limit to which a part of your body can be moved or stretched) and strength.

When should I start doing these exercises?

We have included the table below to explain when to start doing these exercises.

Days after your surgery	Exercises
0 to 9	Do not do any exercises.
10+	<p>Start doing the exercises in a slow and controlled manner throughout the day. You should be able to complete these exercises without experiencing any pain.</p> <p>If you experience any pain while doing an exercise, stop doing it and move on to a different exercise.</p> <p>The exercises should begin to feel easier, and you should find you can move further, back to your normal range of movement, without any pain.</p>

How often should I do these exercises?

We recommend doing these exercises three times a day.

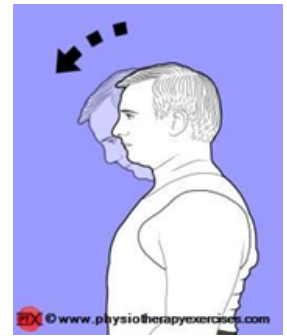
Are there any risks?

You may find these exercises uncomfortable to begin with, but this will improve over time. It is important not to push through pain in the early stages of your recovery, but equally important that you try some to aid your recovery. If you experience any pain, stop doing the exercises and speak to your doctor at your follow-up clinic appointment.

The exercises

Neck flexion

1. Sit towards the front of your chair.
2. Relax your shoulders and hold your hands loosely at your sides.
3. Bend your head forward until you feel a stretch behind your neck.
4. Hold for ____ seconds and then return to the starting position.
5. Repeat ____ times.



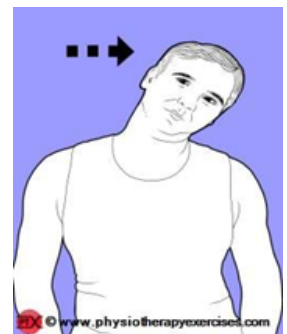
Neck extension

1. Sit towards the front of your chair.
2. Relax your shoulders and hold your hands loosely at your sides.
3. Bend your head backwards as far as is comfortable.
4. Hold for ____ seconds and then return to the starting position.
5. Repeat ____ times.



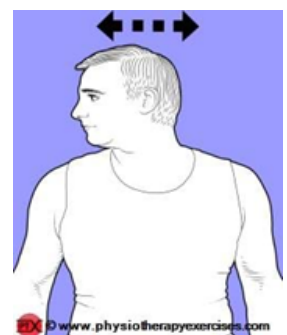
Neck lateral flexion

1. Sit towards the front of your chair.
2. Relax your shoulders and hold your hands loosely at your sides.
3. Tilt your head towards your left shoulder until you feel a stretch on the opposite side.
4. Hold for ____ seconds and then return to the starting position.
5. Then tilt your head towards your right shoulder until you feel a stretch on the opposite side.
6. Hold for ____ seconds and then return to the starting position.
7. Repeat ____ times.



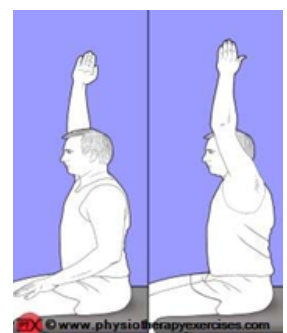
Neck rotation

1. Sit towards the front of your chair.
2. Relax your shoulders and hold your hands loosely at your sides.
3. Turn your head to one side until you feel a stretch.
4. Hold for ____ seconds and then return to the starting position.
5. Then turn your head to the other side until you feel a stretch.
6. Hold for ____ seconds and then return to the starting position.
7. Repeat ____ times.



Shoulder flexion

1. Sit towards the front of your chair with your back straight.
2. Relax your shoulders and hold your hands loosely at your sides.
3. Raise your left arm straight up in front of you as high as you can, letting your thumb lead the way.
4. Hold for ____ seconds and then return to the starting position.
5. Repeat ____ times.
6. Repeat steps 1 to 5 for your right arm.



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Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Head and neck therapy team

Telephone: **023 8120 4644** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm)

All images sourced from PhysioTherapy eXercises: www.physiotherapyexercises.com

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

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