



Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center

Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Rehabilitation:

Headache and Neck Pain

Why Does it Hurt?

After a blast exposure, jump injury, car accident or other way that you might get a head injury, your neck may have experienced some trauma as well. Some people recover quickly from this type of injury while others continue to have pain or stiffness in their necks related to poor posture. This neck pain can become head pain.



1. Ice/Heat:

Ice your neck and head at least 2-3 times a day. Leave it there as you relax for about 20 minutes (or until the pack is no longer cold).

Heat is good for relaxing muscles. You can use a warm gel pack. A 10-20 minute shower works just as well. Most respond to ice better than heat. Try both to see which one works best for you. When using heat or ice with neck stretches (below), use heat to relax muscles before stretching, then use ice after stretching to calm the muscles.

2. Neck Stretches:

Before stretching in any direction, pull up your spine as straight as possible, then “retract” your chin towards your neck. The muscles you are stretching are small and delicate: start low, and go slow. Tips: keep your head level (not bending forward or back), do not tug or shove neck, and gently press on your chin for a deeper stretch:

Pull up:



Retract:



Deeper stretch:



Directions: Start by holding for only about 5-10 seconds, then more each day:

Flexion (chin to chest):



Lateral flexion (ear to shoulder):



Rotation (turn):

