

# Cervical Muscle Strain Exercise Handouts

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Last update: 07/03/2022

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Cervical strain, also referred to as whiplash or neck strain, is a frequent spinal injury. It can, however, occasionally be challenging to distinguish it from other neck and upper torso issues.

Poor posture alone can cause cervical strain, which can progress over time. Stretch injuries to the cervical spine's muscles and ligaments are another common cause of it. There may also be a role for compressive forces, like in the case of an acute incident like a vehicle accident or sports injury.

Cervical muscle range of motion exercises can help with cervical muscle strain. Many such exercises can be done readily at home without specific equipment like the ones listed below.

- **Seated cervical retraction**

**Step 1** – The exercise can be done sitting or standing as per your preference. First, pull your head backward as if trying to make a "double chin," making sure you get to end-range. This can be progressed by using your hand to provide some overpressure.



- Repeat 10-12 times
- 3 sets in a row
- Once-daily
- 5 days a week

### - **Supine chin Tuck**

**Step 1** – Lie on your back.



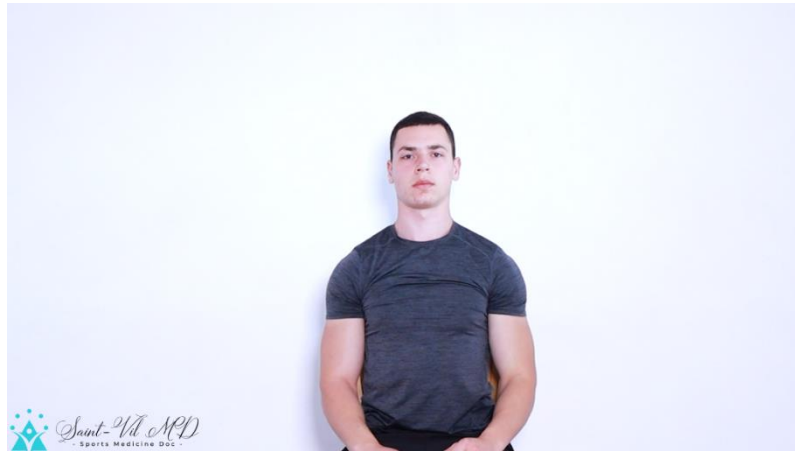
**Step 2** – Without lifting your head, try to gently push the back of your neck into the mat. You will experience a stretch in the back of the neck, and if you are doing it correctly, you will see increased folds just below the chin.



- Repeat 6-8 times
- 3 sets in a row
- Once-daily
- 5 days a week

- **Seated levator scapulae stretch**

**Step 1** – Sit up straight with both arms at the sides.



**Step 2** – Raise the right arm forwards and reach over the back with the hand grasping the right shoulder blade and applying downward pressure. (This step rotates the shoulder blade downward, which helps lengthen the levator scapulae muscle even more before it is stretched. If raising the elbow above the shoulder is too complicated at first, this step can be skipped.)



**Step 3** – While keeping everything else still, rotate the head to the left about 45 degrees (about halfway toward the shoulder).



**Step 4** – Tilt the chin downward until a good stretch is felt on the back right side of the neck. To increase the stretch further, the left hand can be brought up to the back of the head to pull down a little more gently. Hold for 30 to 60 seconds, or as tolerated.



- *Repeat 8-10 times for each side*
- *3 sets in a row*
- *Once-daily*
- *5 days a week*

- **Seated Upper Trapezius Stretch**

**Step 1** – Begin sitting upright on a chair or exercise table and grasp the edge with one hand.



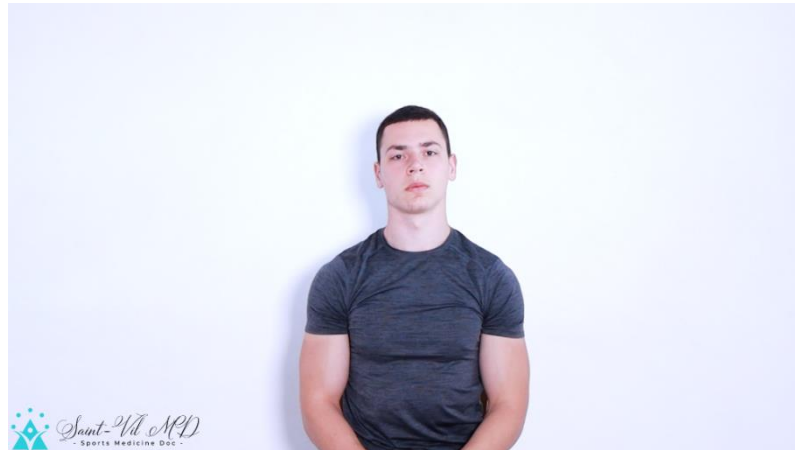
**Step 2** – Rotate your head up and to the side opposite of your anchored arm and slowly lean it toward your shoulder, applying pressure with one of your hands until you feel a stretch and then hold.



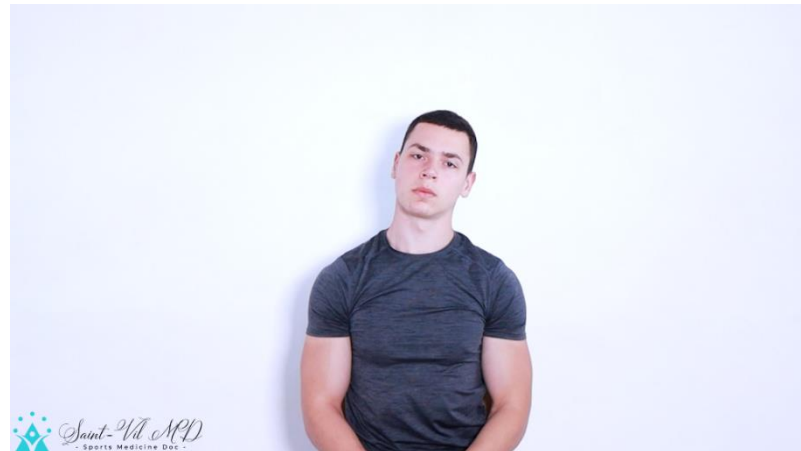
- *Repeat 10 times for each side*
- *3 sets in a row*
- *Once-daily*
- *5 days a week*

- **Seated cervical side benching stretch**

**Step 1** – Sit straight on a bench or chair.



**Step 2** – Move your head to the right but do not rotate the neck.



**Step 3** – You can apply pressure by using a hand.



**Step 4** – Repeat the same motion towards the opposite side.

- *Repeat 8-10 times*
- *2 sets in a row*
- *Once-daily*
- *5 days a week*

- **Seated cervical rotation AROM**

**Step 1** – Begin seated with your palm on the side of your face. Next, rotate your head to one side, and push your head gently further into rotation with your hand. Then, return to starting position.



**Step 2** – Repeat by rotating head to the other side.

- *Repeat 8-10 times*
- *3 sets in a row*
- *Once-daily*
- *5 days a week*

- **Cat-camel to child's pose**

**Step 1** – The initial position must be like quadrupeds by coming on hands and feet and making sure that knees are directly under the hips while hands under the shoulder.



**Step 2 – Cat** Now sink your back towards the floor and at the same time lift your head up, thus making a curve in your spine and taking breathe out at the same time.



**Step 3 – Camel** Now, just make the opposing motion by arching your back to mimic the camel hump



**Step 4 – A child's pose** is a restful pose in yoga, also called "Balasana" in yoga. It involves bending the knees and doing nothing for a few seconds.



- Repeat 20 times alternating between cat and camel



- 3 sets in a row
- Once-daily
- 5 days a week

- **Sternocleidomastoid stretch**

**Step 1** – Find your Sternocleidomastoid muscle and lightly nip it down with 2 fingers – Right where your clavicle is. To locate the SCM, just turn your head to one side and then bring your head forward. The SCM muscle would pop out. This muscle runs from the clavicle to the Mastoid process (just behind your ear).



**Step 2** – Put the other hand on the opposite side of your head and bring your ear down to the shoulder. Make sure you keep holding your SCM on the clavicle with your other hand (with 2 fingers) to increase the stretch.



**Step 3** – Next, tilt the head up to look at the ceiling and use your hand to pull your head back and side to intensify the stretch.



- Repeat 4-6 times each for each side
- 3 sets in a row
- Once-daily
- 5 days a week

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*Last review and update: 07/03/2022*