

Owww...My Neck Is Stiff!

By Josephine Ann A. Aparte

Have you ever woken up to find that it's painful for you to move your neck, especially to one side?

If you answered “yes,” what you had was probably a stiff neck. A stiff neck is a condition that bothers many people. Everyone gets them at some time or another. Even children are not exempt from getting stiff necks.



Stiff necks are caused by many things, but the most common cause is falling asleep in an uncomfortable position.

It is important to know that stiff, sore necks can also be a sign of serious bleeding or infection (meningitis, encephalitis, or an abscess) within or around the brain. This is why you should always see a doctor if you have a stiff neck that doesn't go away after a few days, even after you've tried different remedies. A doctor will know whether what you have is really just a sore neck or some other serious medical condition.

Aside from poor sleep posture, stiff necks can also be caused by stress; vigorous twisting or turning of the neck during exercise; bad posture while in front of the computer, reading, or watching TV; and traumatic accidents or falls. Again, we cannot emphasize this enough: If you had a bad fall or an accident and you developed a stiff neck later on, see a doctor.

Fortunately, there are ways of relieving sore, stiff necks. One good way is to apply an ice pack to it for the first 2 to 3 days. After that period of time, you can apply heat using hot showers, warm compresses, or heating pads. You can also try taking over-the-counter pain medication like acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Ask an adult for guidance on how much medicine to take and how often.

You can also try to perform slow exercises to gently stretch your neck muscles. These exercises may have you trying to move your head and neck up and down and side to side. Of course, since your neck is still sore, you have to do these exercises slowly and gently. If not, you could end up with a stiffer neck than before.

You can ask your mom or dad or gently massage the painful areas of your neck to see if that will help. Experts also suggest sleeping on a firm mattress without a pillow or using a specially designed neck pillow. 🐻

Sources

Nissl, Jan. Stiff neck. <<<http://health.yahoo.com/nervous-overview/stiff-neck/healthwise--sts15226.html>>>

Van Voorhees, Benjamin W. Neck Pain.

<<www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003025.htm>>

PICK THE BEST

Encircle the letter of the best answer:

1. A stiff neck can be caused by:
 - a) Poor posture
 - b) Encephalitis
 - c) Stress
 - d) All of the above

2. Which of these can best ease a stiff neck during the first couple of days?
 - a) Cold compress
 - b) Hot compress
 - c) Ibuprofen
 - d) Massage

3. What is the most common cause of stiff necks?
 - a) Traumatic accidents
 - b) Brain infection
 - c) Falling asleep in an awkward position
 - d) Vigorous neck movement during exercise

4. When should you see a doctor if you have a stiff neck?
 - a) If your stiff neck does not go away even after you've tried all possible remedies
 - b) If your stiff neck is accompanied by other symptoms, such as nausea or vomiting, fever, headache, sleepiness, confusion, extreme grouchiness, or a seizure
 - c) If you had a bad fall or accident recently and developed a stiff neck afterwards.
 - d) All of the above

5. For which of these conditions is a stiff neck one of the symptoms?
 - a) Amoebiasis
 - b) Meningitis
 - c) Cystic acne
 - d) Appendicitis



Answers
1. D
2. A
3. C
4. D
5. B

Medical Mystery Sleuth

You're a topnotch researcher in a medical institution. Your boss just handed you a case file on one of the patients. Your job is to research on the case and submit a report to your boss about your findings. Here are the questions:

1. Patient X complained of difficulty in turning his neck to one side. He said he has spent countless hours working at the computer before this condition developed. Could the long hours in front of the computer be the cause for his stiff neck? Explain why or why not.
2. Patient X reported feeling relieved after applying a cold and then hot compresses to his neck. Why is this so? What do the cold and hot compresses do for a stiff neck?
3. Patient X reported being worried that he had meningitis since a relative of his got this same disease a few months earlier. What is meningitis? How does it develop and affect the body? Was Patient X right to worry that his stiff neck was a symptom of this disease?

