

## CHAPTER 5

# WHEN TO APPLY THE EXERCISES

### WHEN YOU ARE IN SIGNIFICANT PAIN

If the pain is very severe, you may be able to get out of bed with difficulty, but certain movements will be impossible and often you cannot find a comfortable position in which to sit or work. Even though you have severe pain, you should always attempt to commence with exercise 1. Many people find that this exercise gives substantial relief from pain, and they do not have to start exercising in lying. As soon as possible, even on the first day, you should add exercise 2. You should continue the above exercises until you feel considerably better. Once you no longer have acute pain, you should follow the exercise programme as outlined for when acute pain has subsided.

If you have performed three or four sessions of exercise 1, spread over a period of fifteen minutes, and the pain remains too severe to tolerate this exercise, you should stop it and replace it with exercise 3. Your symptoms should gradually reduce and centralise so that there is some improvement by the time you have completed a few sessions. Exercise 4 should be added as soon as you have become well practised in exercise 3 and your symptoms have improved to some extent, or when you cease to improve with exercise 3. When to introduce exercise 4 varies from person to person, but the sooner you can do this the better. It is important that you carefully watch the pain pattern. You are exercising correctly, if in a few days the pain moves towards the base or the centre of the neck and decreases in intensity. In the end the pain should disappear entirely and be replaced by a feeling of strain or stiffness.

When you have improved significantly — usually two to three days after you commenced the exercises in lying, possibly earlier —, you may gradually reduce the number of sessions of exercises 3 and 4 and as you do this you should introduce and gradually increase exercises 1 and 2. In another few days you

are only performing exercises in sitting and you will find that they give the same pain relief as you previously obtained by exercising in lying. At this stage the periods of time that you are completely free of pain are becoming more frequent and start to last longer.

Again, once you feel considerably better and no longer have acute pain, you should continue the exercise programme as outlined for when acute pain has subsided.

### NO RESPONSE OR BENEFIT

When pain is felt only to one side of the spine or much more to the one side than to the other, the exercises recommended so far sometimes fail to bring relief. If this is the case, you should commence with exercise 5. Whether centralisation or reduction of the pain has taken place or not, exercise 5 must always be followed by exercises 1 and 2. After two or three days of practise you may notice that the pain is distributed more evenly across the spine or has centralised. Now you may gradually reduce exercise 5.

When you are considerably better and the pain has fully centralised, you should continue with the exercise programme as outlined for when acute pain has subsided.

### WHEN ACUTE PAIN HAS SUBSIDED

Once the acute pain has passed, you may still feel some pain or stiffness when moving in certain ways. You will notice this best, when turning the head to the one or the other side or bending head and neck forwards to look down. It is likely that at this stage healing of overstretched or damaged soft tissues has taken place. Now you must ensure that the elasticity of these soft tissues and the flexibility of your spine as a whole are restored without causing further damage.

If you have pain on turning the head to the right or the left, you should practise exercise 6; and if you have pain on bending the head forwards, you need to practise exercise 7. Each time