

If your neck pain is of such intensity that you can only move your head with difficulty and cannot find a position to lie comfortably in bed, your approach to the exercises should be cautious and unhurried.

On commencing any of the exercises you may experience an increase in pain. This *initial pain increase* is common and can be expected. As you continue to practise, the pain should quickly diminish, at least to its former level. Usually this occurs during the first exercise session. This should then be followed by centralisation of pain. Once the pain no longer spreads outwards and is felt in the midline only, the intensity of the pain will decrease rapidly over a period of two to three days and in another three days the pain should disappear entirely.

If, following an initial pain increase, the pain continues to increase in intensity or spreads to places further away from the spine, you should stop exercising and seek advice. In other words, do not continue with any of the exercises, if your symptoms are *much worse immediately after exercising and remain worse the next day*; or if, during exercising, symptoms are *produced or increased in the arm below the elbow*.

If your symptoms have been present rather continuously for many weeks or months, you should not expect to be painfree in two to three days. The response will be slower but, if you are doing the correct exercises, it will only be a matter of ten to fourteen days before the pain subsides.

It is recommended that you adopt the sitting position when learning to perform the exercises. Once you fully master them you may exercise in sitting or standing, whichever is most suitable.

However, if the pain is too severe to tolerate the exercises in sitting, it may be necessary to commence exercising while lying down. In the lying position the pain will be reduced, because head and neck are better supported and the compressive forces on the spine are considerably less than in sitting. If you are sixty years of age or older, it is also advisable to commence exercising while lying down. People of the older age groups occasionally experience dizziness or light-headedness when performing extension exercises with the head. If these symptoms should persist you must stop the exercises and seek advice. On the other hand, when the initial attempts of extension exercises in lying do not have any ill effects, you can safely proceed to exercising in sitting.

If, due to some medical problems, it is difficult or not advisable for you to lie flat, you should restrict yourself to exercising in the upright sitting position.

When you commence this exercise programme you should stop any other exercises that you may have been shown elsewhere or happen to do regularly — for example for fitness or sport. If you want to continue with exercises other than the ones described in this book for neck problems, you should wait until your pains have subsided completely.

Once you have started this exercise programme, you should expect new pains to develop. These are different from your original pain and are usually felt in areas of the neck and shoulder girdle which were previously not affected. New pains are the result of performing movements your body is not used to and, provided you continue with the exercises, they will wear off in three to four days.