

REGULAR INTERRUPTION OF PROLONGED NECK BENDING

If you spend long periods of time in the sitting position — for example while knitting or performing desk tasks —, it is likely that, even with the best of intentions, you will eventually forget to maintain the correct posture. Gradually you will assume a more or less protruded head posture or a position in which both head and neck are bent forwards. To counteract this you must frequently interrupt the forward bent position by correcting your neck posture and stretching head and neck backwards. (See Chapter 4. Exercise 2) This will relieve the stresses on the discs between the vertebrae as well as the surrounding tissues.

Rule: *When sitting for prolonged periods, regular interruption of prolonged neck bending is essential. This can be achieved by retracting the head and extending the neck five or six times at regular intervals, for example each hour.*

2. Lying and Resting

The next most frequent cause of neck pain is postural stress in the lying position. If you wake up in the morning with a stiff and painful neck that was not causing problems the night before, there is likely to be something wrong with the surface on which you are lying or the position in which you sleep. It is a comparatively easy task to correct the surface on which you are lying, but rather difficult to influence the position you adopt while sleeping. Once you are asleep you may just regularly change your position or you may toss and turn. Unless a certain position causes so much discomfort that it wakes you up, you have no real idea of the various positions you assume while sleeping.

CORRECTION OF SURFACE

All that is required to correct the surface on which you are lying is to alter your pillow. You may need to change the material of which it is made, the thickness of it, or both. You must realise that the main function of the pillow is to *support both head and neck*. Therefore it should fill the natural hollow in the contour of the neck between head and shoulder girdle without tilting the head or lifting it up. On the contrary, the head should be allowed to rest in a dish-shaped hollow. It follows that you must be able to adjust the contents of the pillow easily. Ideally your pillow should be made of feathers or kapok, with rubber or foam chips as a second choice. By pulling and pushing the contents you can make a hollow for your head and bunch the edge to form a thick support for your neck. Pillows made of moulded rubber or foam plastic do not allow their contents to be adjusted. They always adopt the shape or their original mould irrespective of attempts to change them. They do not permit the head to rest into a dish-shaped hollow but tend to apply a recoil pressure against the natural position the head would like to adopt. If you have such a pillow, you should replace it with one made of the recommended materials.

If, for some reason or other, the pillow does not provide adequate support for your neck, you should use a supportive roll in addition. Make a soft foam roll of about three inches