



# CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

## Neck Pain: After Your Visit

### Your Kaiser Permanente Care Instructions

You can have neck pain anywhere from the bottom of your head to the top of your shoulders. It can spread to the upper back or arms. Injuries, painting a ceiling, sleeping with your neck twisted, staying in one position for too long, and many other activities can cause neck pain.

Most neck pain gets better with home care. Your doctor may recommend medicine to relieve pain or relax your muscles. He or she may suggest exercise and physical therapy to increase flexibility and relieve stress. You may need to wear a special (cervical) collar to support your neck for a day or two.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

### How can you care for yourself at home?

- Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
  - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
  - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
  - Do not take two or more pain medicines at the same time unless the doctor told you to. Many pain medicines contain acetaminophen, which is Tylenol. Too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be harmful.
  - No one younger than 20 should take aspirin. It has been linked to Reye syndrome, a serious illness.
- If your doctor recommends a cervical collar, wear it exactly as directed.

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- Put ice or a cold pack on the painful area for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.
- Avoid things that might increase swelling, such as hot showers, hot tubs, or hot packs, for the first 2 days after an injury.
- You can use a warm pack or heating pad set on low 2 days after an injury if you do not have swelling. Some doctors recommend switching back and forth between heat and cold.

### When should you call for help?

**Call 911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- Your arms and legs feel weak or numb.
- You cannot move one or both arms or legs.
- You cannot control your bowels or bladder.
- You have a fever with a stiff neck or a severe headache.
- You have neck pain that occurs with:
  - Sweating.
  - Shortness of breath.
  - Nausea or vomiting.
  - Pain that spreads from the chest to the neck, jaw, or one or both shoulders or arms.
  - Dizziness or lightheadedness.
  - A fast or uneven pulse.

After calling 911, chew 1 adult-strength aspirin. Wait for an ambulance. Do not try to drive yourself.

**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your neck pain keeps you from moving your head.
- Your neck pain is getting worse.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You have swollen glands or a lump in your neck.

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- You do not get better as expected.

### Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter V723 in the search box to learn more about **"Neck Pain: After Your Visit"**.

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