

Neck & Upper Back Pain



Scan this QR Code to access a detailed video that enhances the information in this handout. It includes step by step guidance and visual demonstrations for each exercise.

What are muscle spasms?

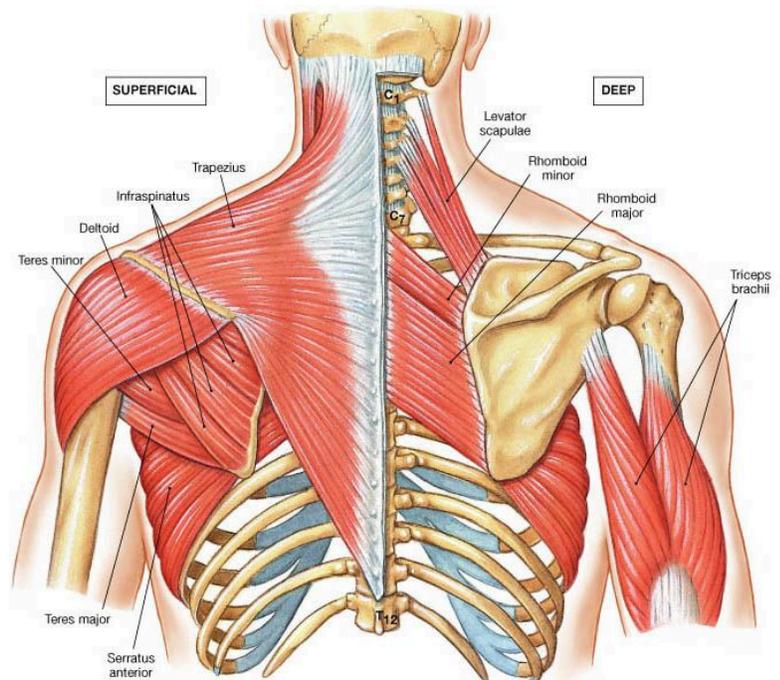
Muscle spasms often result from myofascial trigger points, also known as muscle knots. These knots cause muscles to tighten, harden, and become painful. Factors contributing to their formation include injury, poor posture, repetitive movements, chronic tension, or even a poor night's sleep.

How is it treated?

Treating trigger points effectively requires a multimodal approach. Applying heat can enhance blood flow and relax muscles. Daily stretching of the affected muscles improves mobility and range of motion. Engaging in aerobic exercises, like walking or stationary bike, enhances circulation and reduces pain. Additionally, using a massage ball for acupressure therapy can help break up the muscle knots.

How to prevent muscle spasms?

Ensure your work and office ergonomics are optimal. Regularly take breaks and engage in stretching exercises to avoid tightness. Addressing early, mild symptoms promptly can often prevent them from worsening.



Neck & Upper Back Stretches & Exercises

Consistent stretching can accelerate recovery and prevent recurrence. The following stretching regimen can be done in 5 minutes and should be done 2-3 times daily.

Active Warm Up

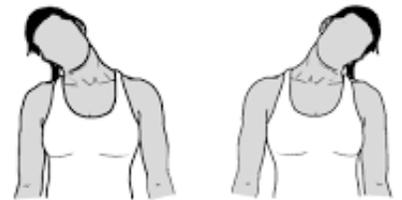
Side to Side Neck Rotation

- Sit up straight with your shoulders relaxed. Slowly turn your head to the right, aiming to bring your chin in line with your shoulder. Slowly rotate your head back to the center and then turn to the left shoulder.
- Repeat this 10 times.



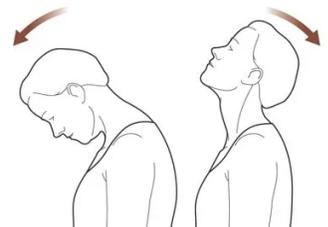
Side to Side Neck Bend

- Keep your shoulders relaxed. Gently tilt your head to the right, aiming to bring your ear toward your shoulder. Slowly bring your head back to center and then tilt your head to the left side.
- Repeat this 10 times.



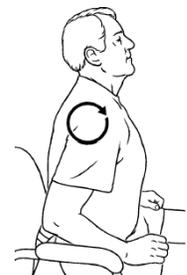
Neck Flexion and Extension

- Slowly lower your chin towards your chest. Once you get to the end range, gently lift your head back to the starting position and then tilt your head back, looking all the way up.
- Repeat this 10 times.



Forward Shoulder Roll

- Lift your shoulders up towards your ears and then gently roll your shoulders forward making a circular motion. Continue the motion back down and then back to the starting position.
- Repeat this 10 times.



Backward Shoulder Roll

- Lift your shoulders up towards your ears and then gently roll your shoulders backwards making a circular motion. Continue the motion back down and then back to the starting position.
- Repeat this 10 times.



Neck & Upper Back Stretches

Upper Trapezius Stretch

- Sit with your shoulders relaxed. Keep your right hand next to your side and gently tilt your head to your left, bringing your ear towards your left shoulder. Enhance the stretch by applying gentle pressure with your left hand on top of your head.
- Hold 30 seconds on each side.



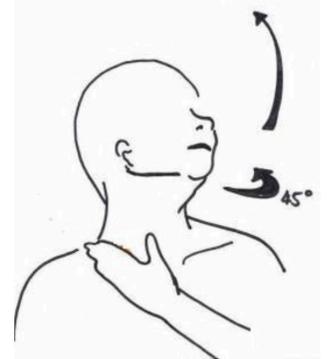
Levator Scapula Stretch

- Sit with your shoulders relaxed. Turn your head to a 45 degree angle towards the left. Gently lower your chin towards your chest and aim it towards the armpit. Use your left hand to gently press down on your head. Put your right hand behind your back for a deeper stretch.
- Hold 30 seconds on each side.



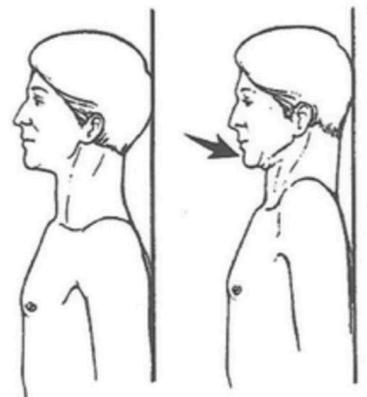
Anterior Scalene Stretch

- Sit with your shoulders relaxed. Try to touch your left ear to the shoulder. Then look upwards at a 45 degree angle. You should feel a stretch along the front of your right neck.
- Hold 30 seconds on each side.



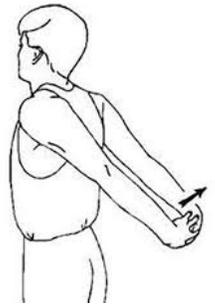
Chin Tucks

- Sit with your spine in neutral position. Gently pull your head straight back keeping your gaze forward and your chin parallel to the floor. Hold the tucked position for 3 seconds and then relax and return your head to the starting position.
- Repeat the exercise for a total of 10 times.



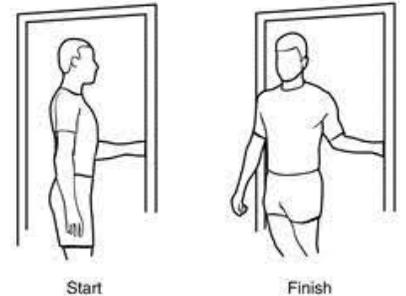
Anterior Shoulder Stretch

- Objective: improve flexibility of chest and anterior shoulder
- Clasp your hands behind your back and lift backwards and upwards. Pull your shoulders back to deepen the stretch.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds.



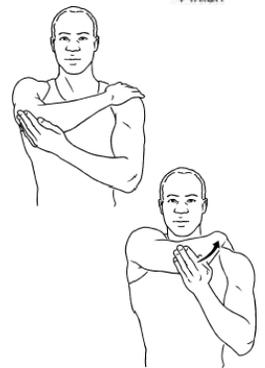
External Rotation Shoulder Stretch

- Objective: improve flexibility of external rotators
- Stand at a doorway or use the edge of a desk or counter. Place the inside of your forearm against the hard surface. Gently lean your body away until you feel a stretch in the outer back shoulder.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds.



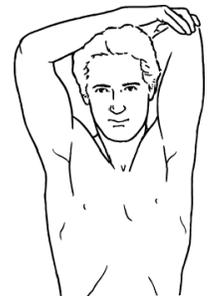
Posterior Shoulder Stretch

- Objective: improve flexibility of posterior shoulder
- Bring your arm across your chest and bend at the elbow. Use your other hand to press the arm closer to your chest. You should feel a stretch in the back of the shoulder.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds.



Inferior Shoulder Stretch

- Objective: improve flexibility of the inferior capsule of the shoulder
- Lift your arm overhead and bend at the elbow. Use your other hand to press downwards. You should feel a stretch at the bottom of the shoulder.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds.



Internal Rotation Shoulder Stretch

- Objective: improve flexibility for internal rotation
- Hold a towel or belt in one hand behind your back. Grab onto it with the hand of your affected shoulder. Gently pull upwards with the top hand which will in turn lift the bottom hand higher up the back. You should feel a stretch in the lower front of the shoulder.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds.

