



## Thyroid & Parathyroid Surgery Neck Stretching Exercises

### Introduction

Neck pain and stiffness is common following thyroid or parathyroid surgery. The neck is composed of the vertebrae and ligaments that provide stability, and muscles that provide support and movement. The neck is a vulnerable part of the spine because it is less protected than the rest of it. Importantly, it supports the head, and is very flexible by necessity.

During your thyroid or parathyroid operation, the neck is extended (tilted backwards) for the duration of the procedure, which may be up to several hours. This can cause muscle spasm, which then leads to pain and tension in the neck, and sometimes also causing headaches.

People with pre-existing neck problems, such as cervical spondylosis, or a previous whiplash injury, are more susceptible. Stretching and exercising the neck muscles before and after your surgery significantly reduces the risk of neck spasms and pain.

You should perform the following stretches, holding for 10 seconds each, twice a day, for **10 days before and 10 days after your surgery**. In each exercise, the neck should feel a gentle stretch at the maximal range of movement. Do not bounce with the stretches to avoid further tightening of the muscles. Always return the neck to the neutral position after each stretch.

### 1. Rotation (Sternocleidomastoid Muscle)



From the neutral position, turn your head to the left and hold for 10 seconds. Then turn to the right via the centre, and hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 10 times each side. Return to neutral position.

The Alfred Hospital (Prahran)  
The Avenue Private Hospital (Windsor)  
Knox Private Hospital (Wantirna)  
Monash Medical Centre (Clayton)  
Casey Hospital (Berwick)

### 2. Flexion / Extension (Posterior Neck Muscles)



Tuck your chin to your chest. Feel the stretch in the back of your neck, and hold for 10 seconds. Then tilt your head back as far as you can, and hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 10 times in each direction. Return to neutral position.

### 3. Side Movements (Scalenes and Upper Trapezius)



Tilt your head to the left, as if you are trying to touch your left shoulder with your left ear, without shrugging your left shoulder. You can place your left hand on your head, and right hand on your right shoulder to add a little extra stretch. Hold for 10 seconds. Now repeat the same stretch on the right side moving through the neutral position, and hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 10 times on each side. Return to neutral position.

### 4. Shoulder Shrugs (Trapezius and Levator Scapulae)



Shrug both shoulders at the same time, and hold for 10 seconds. Relax and repeat 10 times. Return to neutral position.