

## Introduction:

If you are receiving this document, first off, thank you for understanding the value in taking care of your body! It's not easy to ask for help and it's exceptionally more challenging to ask a possible stranger for help. We know this, and this is something we don't take lightly. Thank you for trusting us with this task. If you don't know me already, my name is Anthony and I have a doctorate of physical therapy. This is 3 extra years (year round) of schooling following a bachelor's degree. This includes lecture, didactic work and clinical experience in the field. To be licensed you must pass a national boards exam and a jurisprudence exam for the state in which you practice (For me, that is Ohio). The important things to know about myself; I take exercise, movement and longevity seriously because it is a gift that is selfish and selfless. This is something you can do to invest in yourself to be the best version of you for the people around you. Think about eventually playing with your children or grandchildren... That work starts now which is either years or decades in advance. I also have a dog (Beau), that I try to bring with me to experience all facets of life (work, adventure and family). Basing my core beliefs around these pillars has led me to be exceptional at giving the best care I have to offer. Now that you have some background information about myself, I'll end our introduction with a quote:

*"Self discipline is the greatest form of self love".*

I love this quote because taking care of yourself will allow you to be the best version of yourself for the people around you that you care about. It's not selfish to do things for yourself, rather it's self love.

Common causes for cervical pain, cervicogenic headaches and migraines come from muscles in the suboccipital muscle group being tight. These can create problems with cervical mobility, neck / shoulder tightness, headaches and of course pain. This guide will take you through some mobility (to release the tension in the muscles), muscle activation techniques (to allow these muscles to function properly), and strengthening to decrease the likelihood of this pain recurring.

Exercise 1:

**Suboccipital Release:**

- What is this for: This will relieve tension in the upper cervical spine, it is common to feel a stretch during this exercise. This can be used multiple times throughout the day as needed when you have feelings of pain / tightness.
- Equipment needed: Foam roller OR towel roll OR 2 tennis balls and a sock.
- Set up:
  - If you have 2 tennis balls and a sock, place the tennis balls inside the side making a peanut shape.
  - Lay on your back and place your piece of equipment at the base of your skull. You should feel a soft / muscular drop off at the base of the skull, place it here.
  - Gently retract your head or push this muscular spot into the equipment (this may be tender so use a force that tolerable)
  - Hold for 5-10 second, then relax
  - Repeat this 5-10x or until the tension in the spot starts to reside.
  - This should take NO LONGER than 1-2 minutes



Start



Finish

## Exercise 2:

### **Rotational Release:**

- This is building off the previous exercise. It is common to have pain when turning your head side to side, this exercise is geared to improve rotation. This will help with functional mobility like when you're turning your head to reverse your car.
- Equipment needed: Foam roller OR towel roll OR 2 tennis balls and a sock (Hint: You will use this the same way as the previous exercise!)
- Set up:
  - If you have 2 tennis balls and a sock, place the tennis balls inside the side making a peanut shape.
  - Lay on your back and place your piece of equipment at the base of your skull. You should feel a soft / muscular drop off at the base of the skull, place it here.
  - Now, turn your head to a side and hold it for 30 seconds
    - If you aren't feeling a great enough stretch, gently push your head into your equipment of choice.
  - Once completed repeat on the opposite side
  - Complete two 30 second holds on each side



### Exercise 3:

#### ***Cervical SNAGG Rotation***

- This exercise is to stretch the muscles along the neck in the transverse plane (the muscles that help you turn your head side to side)
- Equipment needed: Hand towel
- Position: seated
  - Start by holding one end of the towel in each hand
  - Put the towel around the back of your neck and let it rest on your shoulders
  - With your Left hand, grab the side of the towel hanging down the RIGHT side of your neck
  - Pull this side of the towel along your right jaw line
  - With you RIGHT hand, grab the side of the towel hanging down your LEFT side
  - With the RIGHT hand, pull this side of the towel straight down (this will act as an anchor)
  - With your LEFT hand, pulling the towel should increase the stretch on the RIGHT side of your neck, hold this for 30 seconds (2x)
  - Now switch and repeat these steps on the other side.

Start Position:



End Position:



Exercise 4:

**Cervical SNAGG Extension**

- This exercise is to improve your ability to perform cervical extension or “looking up”. This is a common painful motion when one is experiencing neck pain and / or cervicogenic headaches.
- Equipment needed: Hand towel
- Position: Seated
  - Start with a hand on each end of the towel
  - Put the mid section of the towel behind the base of your head
  - With your hands, pull forward and up
  - As you do this gentle look towards the ceiling
  - Hold for 5-10 seconds
  - Repeat 5-10x



Start Position:



End Position:

Exercise 5:

**Chin tuck (OR the double-chin-inator)**

- This will activate deep cervical flexors on the front side of the neck to improve postural alignment with daily activities. It is common to experience a gentle stretch on the backside of the neck during this exercise.
- This exercise can be performed laying on your back or sitting in a chair and requires no equipment.
  - I recommend starting in the supine (laying down) position before trying this in the seated position.
- While in the start position retract your head (this is the motion of “giving yourself a double chin”)
  - You should feel muscles on the front of your neck working, and a slight stretch of the muscles on the back of your neck.
- Hold this for 5-10 seconds. Accumulate 1 minute worth of hold (6-20 reps)



Start Position:



End Position: