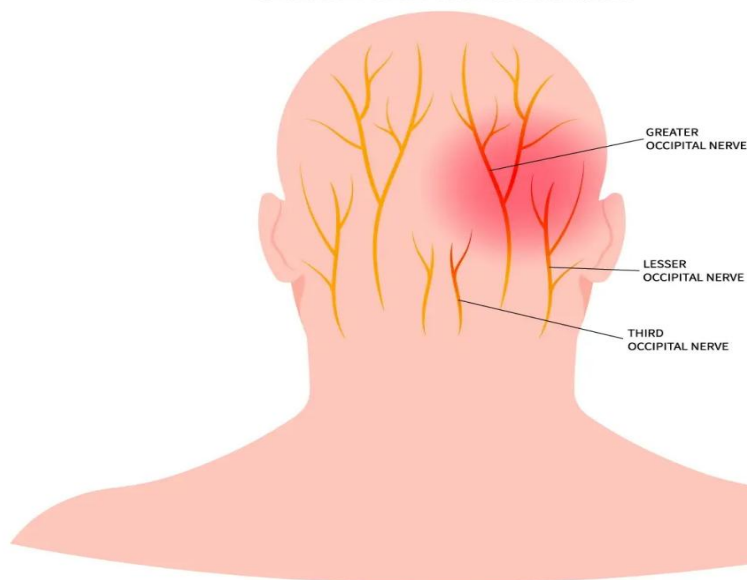


Occipital Neuralgia

OCCIPITAL NEURALGIA



What is Occipital Neuralgia?

Occipital neuralgia is a condition where the **occipital nerves**, which run from the top of the spinal cord up through the scalp, become **irritated or inflamed**.

This causes **pain at the back of the head, scalp, and sometimes behind the eyes**.

Causes

- Compression or irritation of the occipital nerves by muscles in the neck or scalp
- Neck injuries or trauma
- Cervical spine arthritis or degenerative changes

- Tumors or other structural problems (rare)
 - Idiopathic (unknown cause in many cases)
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Symptoms

- Sharp, stabbing, or shooting pain at the **back of the head**
 - Pain may **radiate to the scalp, behind the eyes, or forehead**
 - Sensitivity to **light touch** on the scalp
 - Tenderness at the base of the skull
 - Pain may occur **on one or both sides**
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Diagnosis

- **Medical history** and physical examination
 - **Tenderness** at occipital nerve points
 - **Nerve blocks or imaging** may be used to confirm diagnosis or rule out other conditions
-

Treatment

Treatment usually focuses on **relieving pain and reducing nerve irritation**:

1. Self-Care and Lifestyle

- Apply **heat or cold packs** to the neck
- Gentle **neck stretching and strengthening exercises**
- Improve **posture**, especially when working at a desk

2. Medications

- Pain relievers (paracetamol, NSAIDs)
- Nerve pain medications (e.g., gabapentin, amitriptyline) as prescribed by your doctor

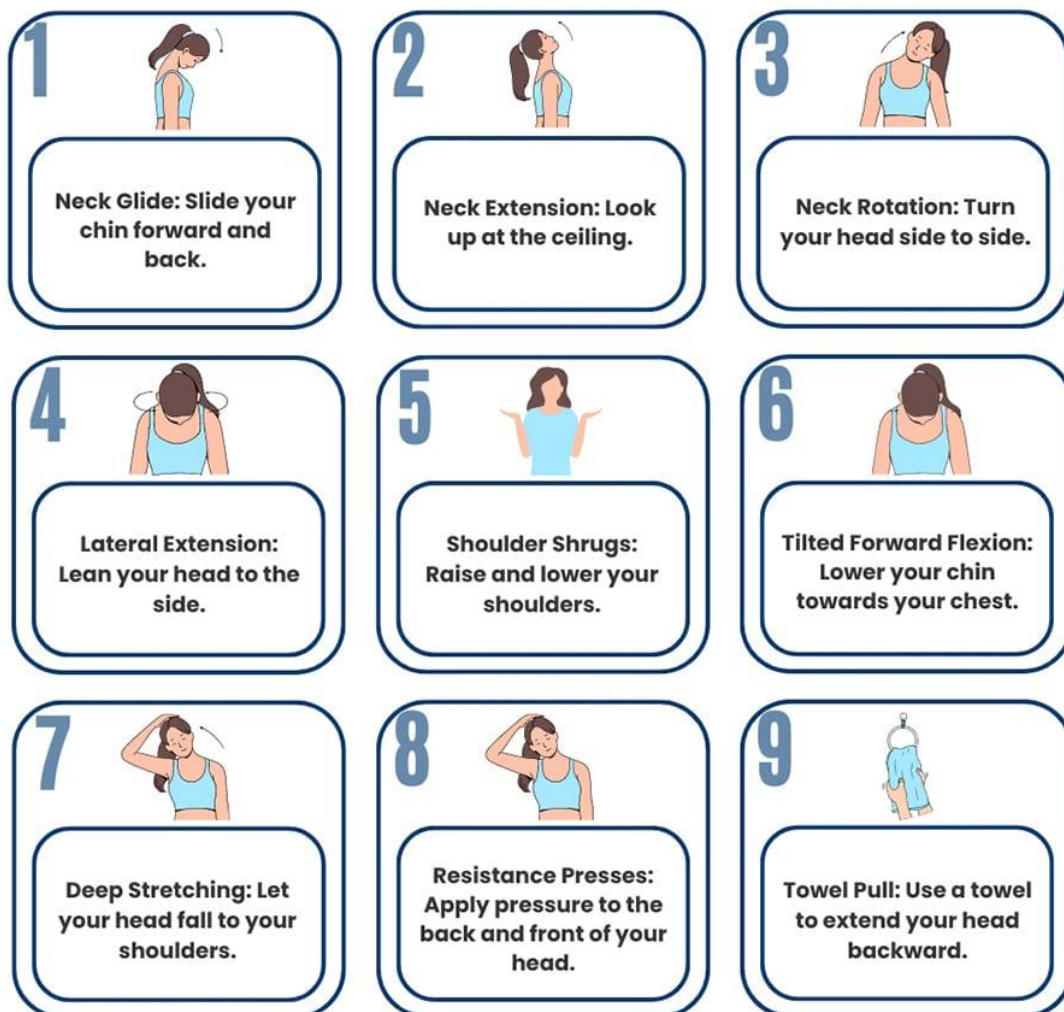
3. Physical Therapy

- Targeted exercises to **reduce muscle tension** in the neck and shoulders
- Massage or myofascial release

4. Procedures

- **Occipital nerve blocks** (local anaesthetic injection)
- **Botulinum toxin injections** in some cases
- **Surgery** is rarely needed and reserved for severe cases

9 Stretches to Relieve Neck Pain



Self-Management Tips

- Avoid prolonged **neck flexion or poor posture**
 - Take **frequent breaks** from screen use
 - Use a **supportive pillow** during sleep
 - Keep a **headache diary** to track triggers
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When to See Your Doctor

Seek urgent medical advice if:

- Pain is **sudden and severe**
 - You develop **numbness, weakness, or vision changes**
 - Pain **does not improve** with conservative treatment
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Prognosis

- Many people experience **improvement with conservative management**
 - Some may need **repeated treatments** for symptom control
 - Early intervention and lifestyle adjustments improve outcomes
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References:

- NHS: Occipital neuralgia
- American Academy of Neurology: *Occipital Neuralgia Guidelines*