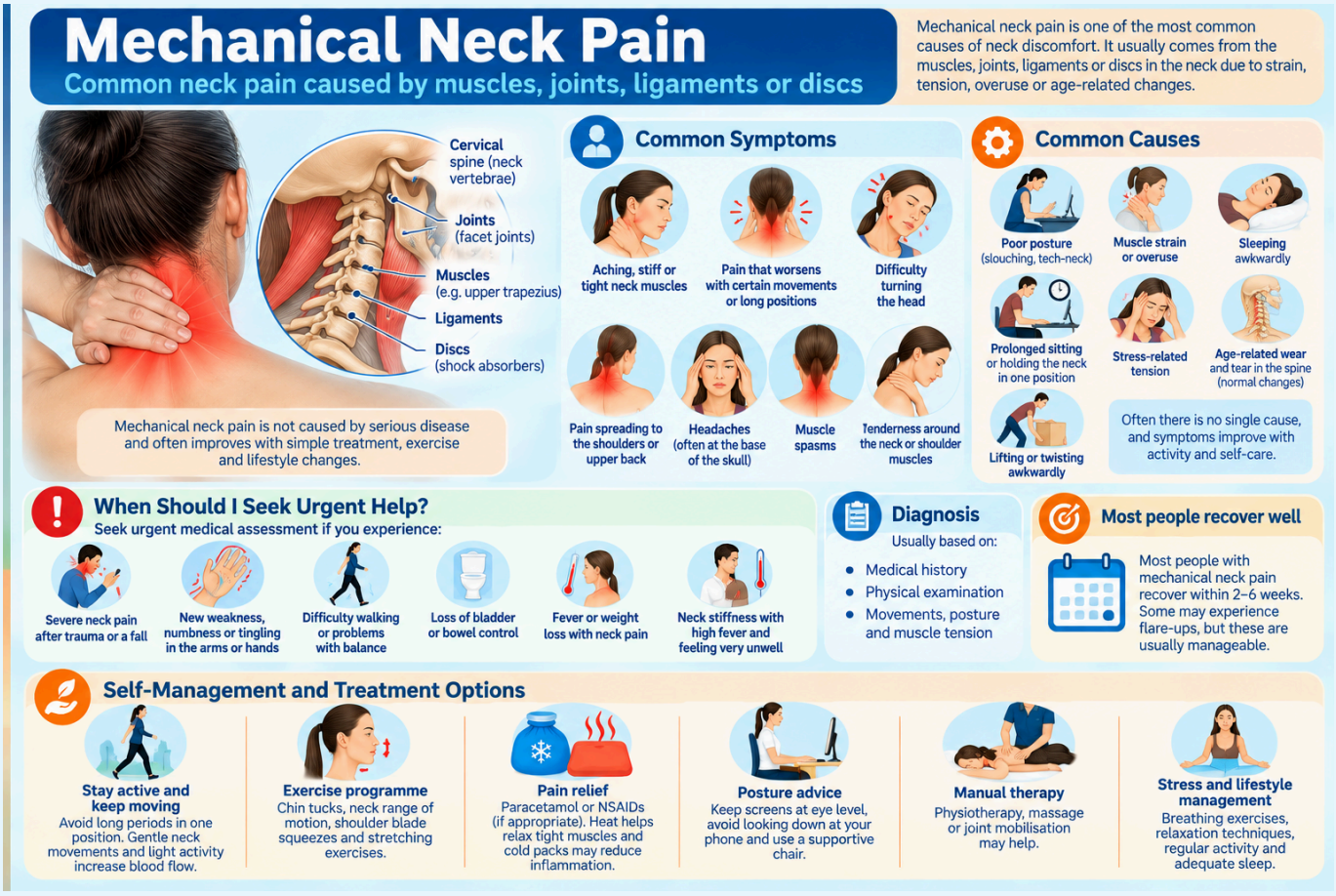
Mechanical Neck Pain

Understanding your symptoms and taking steps towards recovery.



What is mechanical neck pain?

Pain or stiffness arising from the muscles, joints, ligaments or discs of the neck. It often improves with movement, exercise and self-care.

The key message

Keep moving gently, vary your position and gradually return to usual activity. Seek help for new neurological symptoms or severe pain after injury.

Symptoms and causes

Common symptoms

- Aching, stiffness or tightness in the neck
- Pain with certain movements or prolonged positions
- Difficulty turning your head
- Pain into shoulders or upper back; headaches
- Muscle spasms or local tenderness

What can contribute?

Long periods looking down at screens, awkward sleeping positions, muscle strain, stress-related tension, lifting or twisting, and normal age-related changes. Often there is no single cause.

How is it diagnosed?

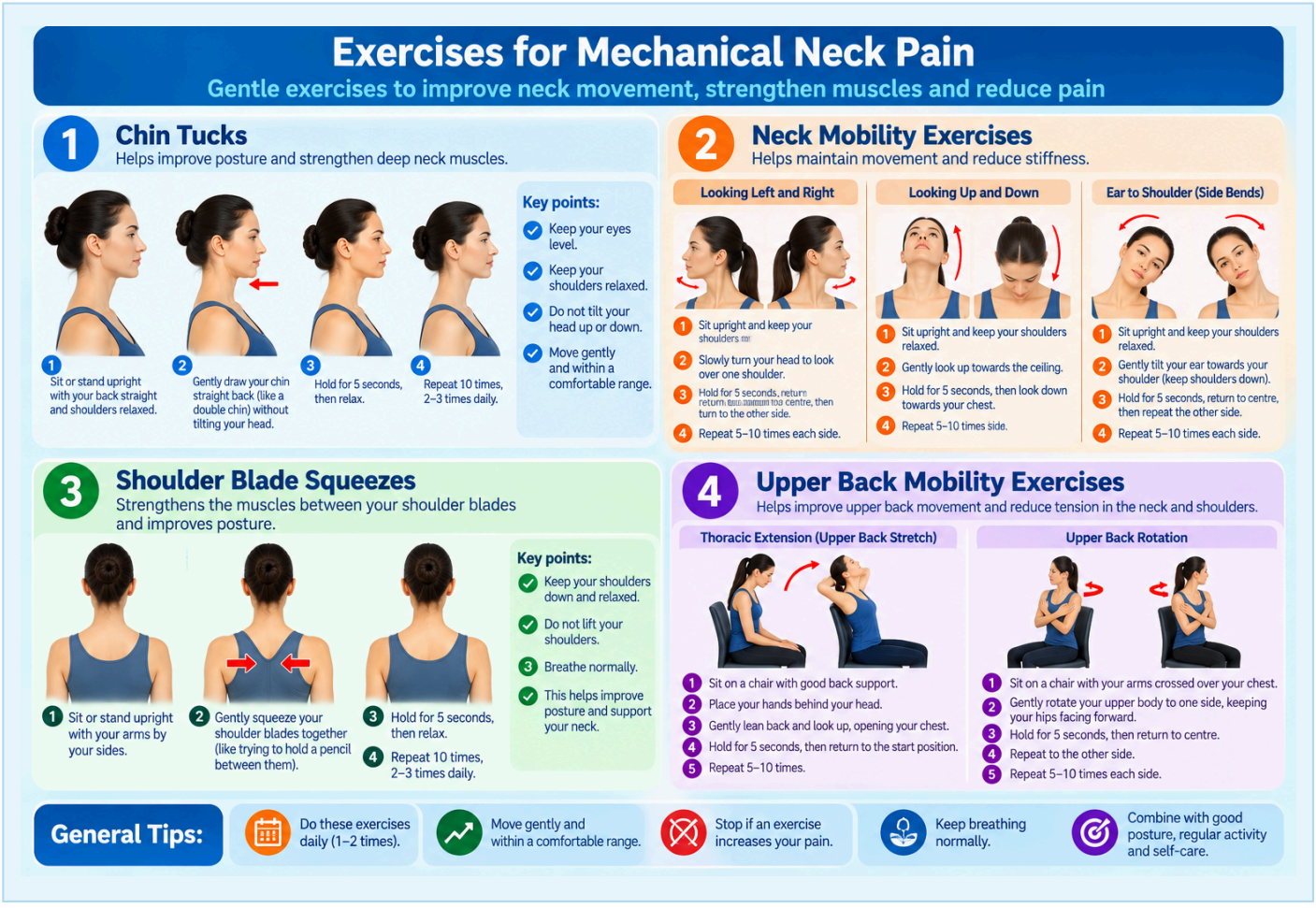
- A clinician will ask about symptoms and examine neck movement, posture and muscle tenderness.
- X-rays and MRI scans are not routinely needed unless symptoms are unusual, persistent or suggest another condition.

When to seek urgent help

Seek urgent assessment for severe neck pain after trauma; new or worsening arm weakness or numbness; difficulty walking or poor balance; bladder or bowel changes; or neck pain with fever, unexplained weight loss or feeling very unwell.

Gentle movement helps

Try comfortable movements regularly rather than keeping your neck still. Your physiotherapist can tailor an



Exercise safely

Move gently within a comfortable range. Reduce or stop exercises that worsen symptoms and ask your physiotherapist for individual advice.

Pain relief and comfort

Heat may ease muscle tension; a wrapped cold pack may help during a flare-up. Ask your GP or pharmacist about suitable pain relief.

Looking after your neck

Helpful everyday habits

- Change position regularly and take breaks from screens.
- Keep your screen near eye level; adjust your chair and workstation.
- Stay active with walking, regular exercises and gentle stretching.
- Try relaxation, breathing exercises and adequate sleep.
- Avoid carrying heavy bags on one shoulder.

Recovery outlook

Many people improve within 2–6 weeks. Flare-ups can happen, but regular activity and exercises can help you manage symptoms and reduce recurrence.

Need more help?

Speak to your GP, MSK clinician or physiotherapist if symptoms are persistent, worsening or limiting daily activities. NHS neck pain information is available at nhs.uk.

B-Well Physiotherapy Services

Phone: 0300 303 4811
Email: bwell.mskberkshire@nhs.net
Website: www.bwellberkshire.co.uk