

Be Neck Aware

Inspired by Norfolk Tinnitus Society - Written by Ann Perry

How many of us cradle the telephone between our neck and ear ? The National Back Pain Association's publication 'Back in the Office' states the practice is harmful to the back and neck. The habit can be a potential tinnitus trigger and it could exacerbate any existing tinnitus. It is all too easy to drop into habits of bad posture and, as much of the tension and stress which exacerbates tinnitus is retained in the head, neck and shoulders, it makes good sense to break these habits as soon as we become aware of them. The use of the **Alexander Technique** is designed to gradually correct these faults, bringing with it a more relaxed posture and more fluid movement to the body.

To **exercise the neck** using the **Semi-supine Position** technique

Lie down (as illustrated below) on a firm surface with a book(s) under your head. The height of the book(s) varies according to the individual ; too many and you cramp your neck, too few and your chin is too high causing strain. Draw your feet up as close to your bottom as they will go without strain, at hip width apart, the elbows resting at the sides with hands directed across the abdomen or chest. Think of your knees being upwards away from the hip joints, elbows directed away from the shoulders. What is needed is a calm state and a clear, attentive mind.



Next turn the head slowly several times from side to side as far as is comfortable - but do not strain. Now take your head as far as is comfortable to one side. Whilst relaxing gently think about turning it further and look along the floor. After a few minutes you will find your head turns further virtually on its own ! Repeat this in the other direction. In time you will find this eases creakiness in the neck and hence your tinnitus - particularly pulsating noises.

Jane Madders, in her book on **Stress and Relaxation** also recommends 'slowly **turning** the *head* from side to side and letting your head **bend** first to one side and then the other remembering to keep your shoulders level. **Drop** your head forward then lift it so that your head is held high. Keep your shoulders down and reach up with the back part of your head as if you're being pulled up by a tuft of hair at the back.' On '*Tension in neck muscles*' Jane writes :

'Feel the muscles at the back of your neck by taking hold of them as though you were picking up a kitten by the scruff of its neck. If your head is resting easily the muscles are soft. Keep hold and slowly jut your head forward to the tense position. You will feel the muscles go tight and hard under your hand. You can sometimes see tram lines of tension in these muscles.'

She further recommends : that a neck-support pillow is useful for those whose neck is particularly curved forward or if there is neck pain and advises that our head is held in the middle and not to one side, or jutting forward. See this in a mirror. Move it very gently to the correct position and keep it there. Try '*Circling Shoulders*' backwards to relieve muscle tension and improve circulation. During the day, notice when you hold these muscles tight : it may be when you are driving, doing housework, telephoning or even when you're resting. Remember that you look more at ease and move with more grace when your shoulders are relaxed.

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