

Heard by Our Editors

Don't skip your follow-up

visit, we hear from Dennis Ko, MD. If you go to the ER for chest pain, treatment guidelines urge you to see a physician for further evaluation within 72 hours of being released. But a new study of nearly 57,000 such patients showed that 25% of them did not get this follow-up—increasing their risk for future problems such as heart attack.

Dennis Ko, MD, senior scientist, Sunnybrook Research Institute, University of Toronto, Canada.

Get your knee rehab at home after surgery,

we hear from Douglas Padgett, MD. When knee-replacement patients went home after surgery but received physical therapy there three times a week for up to six weeks, they did as well as those who were sent to inpatient rehab for 10 to 14 days, then continued therapy at home. Complication rates and pain and



function two years after surgery were the same for both groups. **Caveat:** Patients who live alone, with no family or friends to help, may do better in a rehab facility. Both kinds of physical therapy may be covered by insurance.

Douglas Padgett, MD, chief, Adult Reconstruction and Joint Replacement, Hospital for Special Surgery, New York City.

Bathroom woes may affect overall health,

we hear from Masakazu Terauchi, MD, PhD. In a new study of 351 menopausal women, those who were overweight and/or had trouble sleeping experienced more urinary frequency...stress incontinence (leaking urine when coughing, laughing or sneezing)...waking at night to urinate...and urge incontinence (leaking urine when feeling the need to urinate). **Takeaway:** Controlling body weight and getting adequate sleep may help relieve urinary problems—and fewer urinary problems may mean better sleep. Masakazu Terauchi, MD, PhD, chair, department of women's health, Tokyo Medical and Dental University, Japan.

Robert Turner, PT, OCS
Spine Therapy Center

No More Neck Pain!

4 easy stretches that are sure to give you relief...

Neck pain can be agonizing. But there's more at stake than the discomfort itself. This common complaint also can lead to collateral damage that you'd never expect—by contributing to anxiety or depression.

PROBLEM: Far too many people live with this painful condition for years because they don't really get to the root of the problem.

What's the cause of all this pain? Much of it boils down to poor posture—we sit at computers or in cars for hours at a time...our heads leaning forward to help us see the screen or the road. With our arms extended in front of us, we naturally round forward and our chests tighten, weakening the back muscles—a significant but underappreciated cause of neck pain.

If you hold a phone between your ear and shoulder or carry a heavy bag over one shoulder, you're only making matters worse. Or you may awaken with a "crick" in your neck from sleeping in an awkward position. And if you lie on the couch for hours at a time, you're speeding the muscle atrophy and inflexibility that will keep you in misery.

But there is hope! Doing the right type of stretching is incredibly effective at relieving neck pain.

WHAT GETS OVERLOOKED: While you might be tempted to target only the neck itself in these stretches, it's crucial to also do chest and back stretches to help correct musculoskeletal system imbalances and restore flexibility.



Here are four great stretches for neck pain—the entire routine can be performed in about 10 minutes.* (If you're short on time, just do the first two stretches when you start to feel neck discomfort or after you've been sitting for 90 minutes.)

• **Chicken wings.** This move opens the chest and strengthens the shoulder blades, which helps relieve pressure on the neck.

WHAT TO DO: While sitting up straight on a chair, extend your arms out to the sides and touch your fingertips to your shoulders. Roll both shoulders back and down. You should feel the



muscles between your blades contract. The key is not working too hard—give it 50% of your effort, not 100%—or you'll end up straining your neck. Hold for one breath in and one breath out, then relax. Repeat 10 times. Perform this series twice a day.

• **Triple neck stretch.** These exercises stretch the larger muscles >>

**These exercises are safe for most people. If you experience pain, numbness or tingling in the hand or arm that does not go away after exercise or becomes worse, don't do the exercise again and tell your doctor.*

Bottom Line/Health interviewed...

Robert Turner, PT, OCS, a board-certified orthopedic clinical specialist and clinical supervisor at the Hospital for Special Surgery's Spine Therapy Center in New York City. Turner is also a licensed acupuncturist and certified Pilates instructor.



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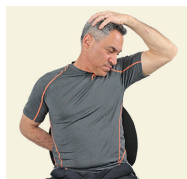
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>> that attach the head and neck to the shoulders.

WHAT TO DO: While sitting on the edge of a chair, lightly press the back of your right hand against the middle of your lower back, with your right elbow pointing directly out to the side. While looking straight ahead, tilt your head to the left, being careful not to rotate your neck. (You can use your left hand to gently pull your head down, intensifying the stretch.) Hold for five to 10 breaths.



For the second step, with your right hand still on your back and your head still tilted to the left, rotate your chin down so that your nose is pointing toward your left armpit. You'll start to feel a deeper stretch in the back of your neck and chest. (Keep sitting tall, and don't let your right shoulder hunch forward.) Hold for five to 10 breaths.



Lastly, with your nose still pointing toward your armpit, place the palm of your right hand behind your neck, keeping your shoulder blades down, and hold for five to 10 breaths. Repeat the three-step series on the other side of your body, and you have just completed one round. Try to do one or two more rounds throughout the day...or whenever pain crops up.



• **Prone extension.** This move strengthens your back muscles so that your neck does not have to work so hard to maintain proper posture. *Note:* If you have low-back pain, put a pillow under your hips when doing this stretch and the next one to avoid straining this part of your back.

WHAT TO DO: Lie on your stomach on a padded mat or carpet with your hands stacked beneath your forehead, legs straight and your knees and ankles together.

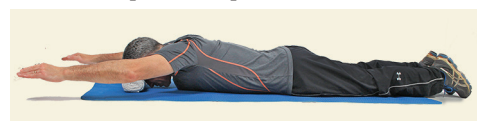
Pull your navel in toward your spine to help support your lower back, and push both shoulder



blades down toward your feet as you inhale and arch your upper back at least two to three inches off the floor (your hands and arms should rise with your upper body). Exhale on the way back down. Repeat for a total of 10 lifts. Take a brief break, then repeat two more sets, eventually progressing to three sets of 15.

• **Shoulder blade lift.** This stretch will strengthen the back and shoulder muscles that help maintain correct head and neck alignment.

WHAT TO DO: Lie on your stomach on a padded mat or carpet with a rolled-up towel placed beneath



your forehead, nose pointing toward the floor to keep your neck in a straight line and your arms pointed forward in a Y formation.

While keeping your head down and neck relaxed, inhale as you lift your arms, hands and upper chest a few inches off the floor...hold for a beat, and exhale as your arms lower back down. Repeat 10 times. You will feel the muscles around the shoulder blades and middle back engage to lift the arms.

CAUTION: If you experience shoulder pain, modify the stretch by bending your elbows into a wide goalpost position. People who have had rotator cuff surgery or a shoulder injury can try this move while lying facedown on a bed, raising the arms off the edge of the bed toward the ceiling. **BLH**

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