

Neck and Shoulder Stretches

Axial SpA (AS) commonly causes low back pain and sacroiliac joint pain, which can be difficult to manage. However, there are some things you can do to help relieve the pain and remain active.

Neck movements:

1. Sit looking forward and gently tilt your head over to the left side (taking your left ear towards your left shoulder). Then slowly return to the centre. Repeat to the right
2. Look to the left as far as comfortable, then return to the centre. Repeat to the right
3. Slowly look down towards the floor as far as comfortable, then return to the centre
4. Gently look up towards the ceiling, then return to the centre

Chin Tucks:

1. Sit comfortably looking forwards
2. Keeping your eyes level (not tilting your head up or down), gently bring your head back as far as comfortable
3. Hold the position for one breath. It's natural to feel some tension at the back of your neck as you do this
4. Relax and then repeat two more times

Neck Semi-circles:

1. Sit comfortably looking forwards and then gently look down towards the floor as far as comfortable
2. Slowly turn your head towards the left as far as comfortable and then repeat to the right side
3. Repeat each side twice before bringing your head back up to a neutral position again. (It's natural to feel some tension in your neck and shoulders during this exercise, but stop if it's too strong or it causes pain)

Shoulder Movements:

1. While inhaling, shrug both your shoulders up towards your ears. As you exhale, relax your shoulders down. Repeat two more time.
2. Roll your shoulders forwards in circles three times, then repeat in the other direction three times
3. While sitting or standing, gently stretch one arm out to the side and behind you to feel a stretch at the front of your shoulder and chest. Repeat on the opposite side. (To make this stronger, you can do both arms at the same time, but build up to this gradually)

To stretch the muscles that run from your neck into your shoulder:

1. Sit comfortably looking forward
2. Gently tilt your head over to the left side (taking your left ear towards your left shoulder)
3. Then slowly turn your head to the left (as if you're trying to look at your armpit)
4. Hold for a couple of breaths, then return to the centre
5. Repeat to the opposite side. (Stop if this causes any pain, discomfort or pins/needles)