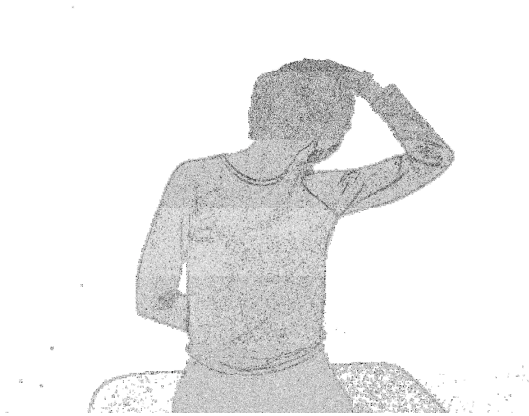


STRETCHING THE NECK MUSCLES

Two major groups of muscles commonly account for many of the complaints of recurring neck stiffness and tension headaches - the upper-trapezius and the sub-occipitals. These muscles become tight primarily as a result of bad posture, bad furniture and stress. The long term solutions are to sit up straight, use furniture than helps you sit up straight, avoid furniture that makes you slouch, and, of course, reduce stress if possible.

In the meantime, take a few moments out of each day to stretch your tight muscles. Remember to breath slowly and deeply as you do these stretches. Take your time.

Number One: Stretch the trapezius muscles



The upper trapezius muscle starts along the top of the shoulder blade and attaches all the way up the side of the neck and the base of the skull. When you are cold or stressed it contracts and pulls your shoulders toward your ears.

Stretch the upper trapezius by sitting up straight with your chin tucked in slightly, place one hand on your back to anchor your shoulder. Place the other hand loosely on top of your head and gently let the weight of your arm pull your ear toward your shoulder.

Count to ten, release and repeat three times on both sides.

Number Two: Stretch the sub-occipital muscles.



The sub-occipital muscles include several muscles that begin at various places in the upper neck and all attach under the base of the skull. These tighten up when you slouch in your seat or have to squint or use bi-focals excessively. These are commonly involved with chronic stress headaches.

Stretch the sub-occipital muscles by sitting up straight as described above and turn your head about 45 degrees until your nose faces your arm-pit. Then place the hand your are looking toward on top of your head with the fingertips gripping the base of the skull. Slowly and gently allow the weight of the arm to roll the base of your skull upward and forward as though you were rolling a ball.

Count to ten, release and repeat three times on each side.