



GOODMAN CAMPBELL  
BRAIN AND SPINE

# SO YOU HAVE HAD NECK SURGERY. WHAT NOW?

EXERCISE BOOK



## SUCCEED IN RECOVERY

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Here are some simple stretches and exercises to help you recover from neck surgery.

There are a wide array of neck surgeries, from minimally invasive to multilevel fusions. For any large operation, you will need to discuss the timing of beginning these exercises with your surgeon. Also, listen to your body. If it is not ready, then be patient and wait.

Everyone heals at a different rate, and there are many factors that will guide your experience after surgery. Walking every day is important. Challenge yourself to do a little more each day.

### Remember:

1. Keep a good posture.
2. Walking is good for you.
3. Work towards strengthening your arms through exercise.
4. Begin core-strengthening exercises when you're ready and when your surgeon clears you for that level of activity.
5. Try ice to reduce pain/inflammation.
6. Heat can sometimes help muscle ache/spasms.

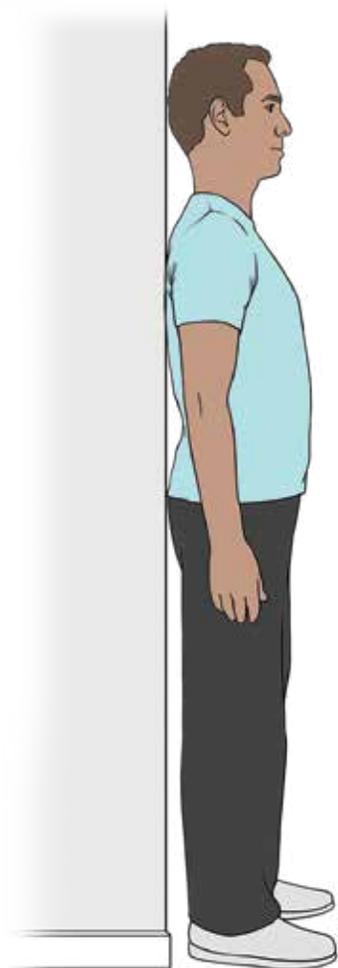


ACTIVITY 01

## **POSTURE**

Stand with your back against the wall and lean back against it. Try to have your back, shoulders, and head touch the wall at the same time by contracting your muscles. You may have to bend your knees slightly to achieve this position.

**HOLD THIS FOR 1 - 3 MINUTES  
AND REPEAT 1 - 3 TIMES A DAY.**

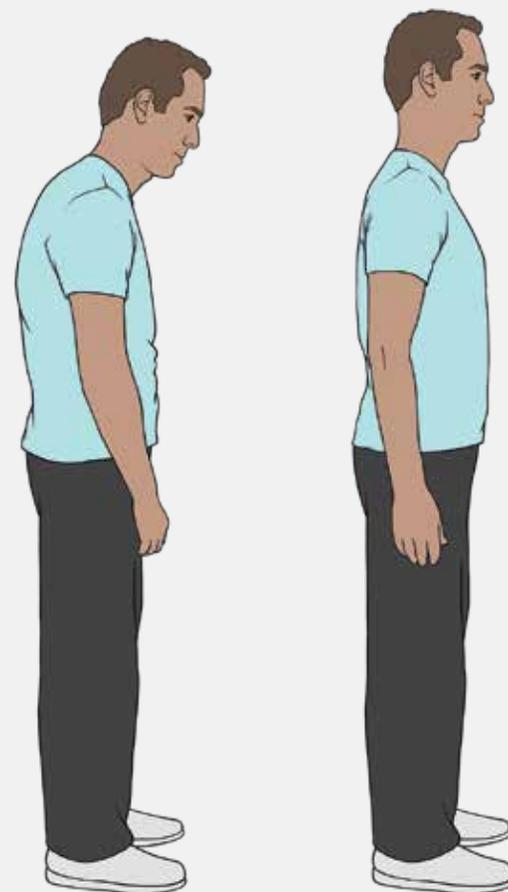


ACTIVITY 02

## **POSTURE**

Poor posture (illustration below on the left). Notice the shoulders are rounded and the head is forward.

Correct posture (illustration below on the right). Shoulders should be back, eyes forward, chin and neck in neutral so that the head, shoulders, and hips are in a straight line.





## START WITH WALKING

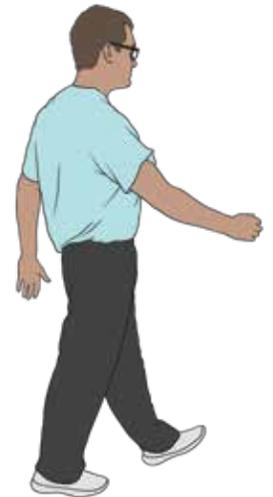
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Try to keep your head, shoulders, and back in alignment.

Swing your arms comfortably in time with your footsteps. Make your step lengths even.

Feel your heel touch first and finish the step by pushing off on your toes.

Work on increasing your distance every day.



# NERVE GLIDING

The nerves can be gently moved to help prevent scar tissue build-up around the nerves from surgery. Nerve gliding exercises can also help loosen up muscles that have been tight for a long time.

Don't be concerned if you feel numbness, tingling, or some pain while you do the nerve gliding. This should decrease over time and is part of the healing process.

If the pain is severe, do the movement more gently at first.

## ACTIVITY 01

### **NERVE FLOSSING**

Place your arm out at 90 degrees to the shoulder. Keep your elbow straight, fingers facing behind you and palm flat against the wall.

Gently rotate your body away from the outstretched arm for 1 - 2 seconds, then back. "Glide" backward and forward to achieve a "nerve flossing" effect. You may feel numbness, tingling, and/or pain, which should gradually improve as you "glide."

**GLIDE 10 - 20 TIMES  
ON BOTH SIDES.  
REPEAT 1 - 3 TIMES A DAY.**



# STRETCHES

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The stretches are designed to get your muscles moving after surgery.

There is a wide array of neck surgeries, from minimally invasive to large multilevel fusions. For any larger surgery you will need to discuss with your surgeon the timing of starting these stretches and exercises. For most less invasive surgeries you may start the stretches as soon as you are able after returning home from surgery.

Also, listen to your body. If it is not ready, then be patient and wait. Everyone heals at a different rate, and there are many factors that will affect your recovery.

Start slowly and work up to a full stretch. Remember that it is normal to feel some numbness, tingling, and pain as you heal.

## ACTIVITY 01

### SCALENES STRETCH

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This is an important stretch but may not be possible for the first 3 months after bigger surgeries. Ask your surgeon.

Looking straight ahead, gently hold the collarbone. Slowly turn your head away from your hands until you feel a stretch. Be more gentle on the side that has the incision until it has fully healed.

**HOLD FOR 30 SECONDS.  
REPEAT 3 TIMES.  
DO THIS 1 - 3 TIMES A DAY.**



## ACTIVITY 02

### BICEPS STRETCH

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Place your hand on a wall behind you. Keep your head comfortably facing forward.

**HOLD FOR 30 SECONDS.  
REPEAT 3 TIMES. DO THIS  
1-3 TIMES A DAY.**



ACTIVITY 03

## LATISSIMUS DORSI STRETCH

Start by standing or sitting up with your arms over your head. Hold the wrist of the side you want to stretch and draw it over to the side, bending at the waist until a gentle stretch is felt along the side of your body. You may need to bend slightly forward in order to feel the stretch.



HOLD FOR 30 SECONDS.  
REPEAT 3 TIMES. DO THIS  
1 - 3 TIMES EACH DAY.

ACTIVITY 04

## CHEST/PECTORALIS MAJOR AND MINOR STRETCH

Stand in a doorway with one hand and arm flat against the wall. Your arm should be at a 90-degree angle (as shown). Gently turn your body away from the arm being stretched.

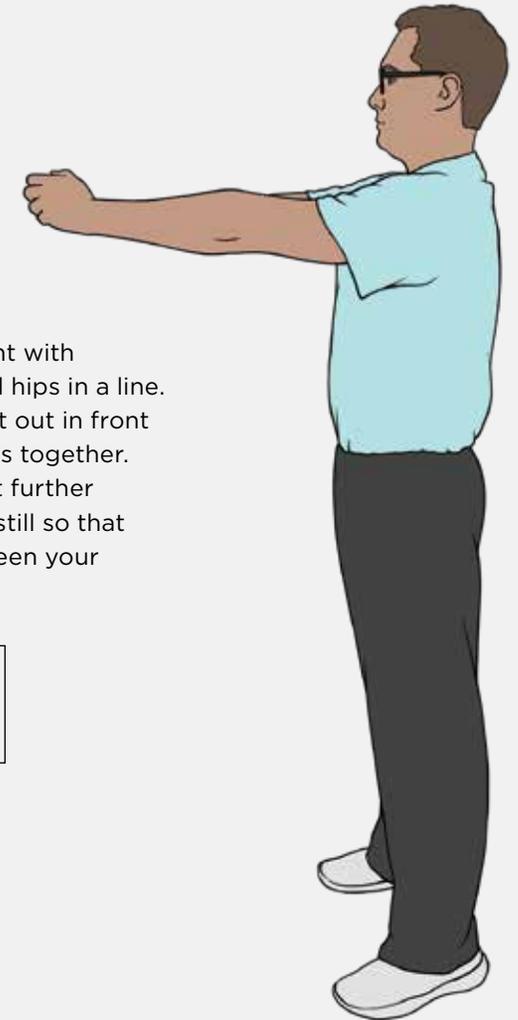


HOLD FOR 30 SECONDS.  
REPEAT 3 TIMES. DO THIS  
1 - 3 TIMES EACH DAY.

ACTIVITY 05

## RHOMBOID STRETCH

Keep your posture straight with your head, shoulders, and hips in a line. Stretch your arms straight out in front of you and join your hands together. Try to pull your hands out further while keeping your head still so that you feel the stretch between your shoulder blades.



HOLD FOR 30 SECONDS.  
REPEAT 3 TIMES. DO THIS  
1 - 3 TIMES EACH DAY.

# EXERCISES

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The exercises are designed to help your muscles get moving after surgery. They will aid in preventing blood clots and help you return to your daily activities. You may start them as soon as you return home from surgery.

They are in order from easy to difficult. It may take you a few days, or even weeks, to be able to do all of them.

At your next visit, your surgeon may release you to do more vigorous exercise.

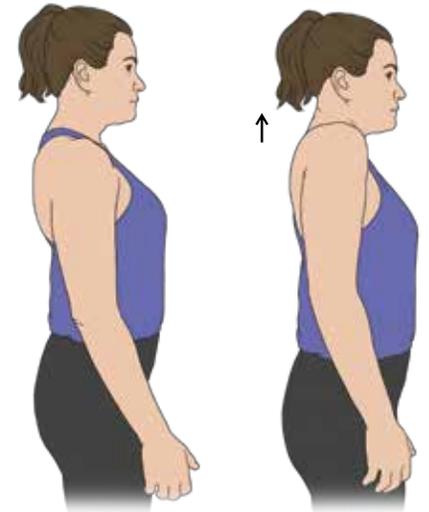
## ACTIVITY 01

### SHOULDER SHRUGS

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Using good posture and neck alignment, shrug your shoulders up as far as you can, then relax.

REPEAT 10 - 30 TIMES.  
DO 1 - 3 TIMES A DAY.



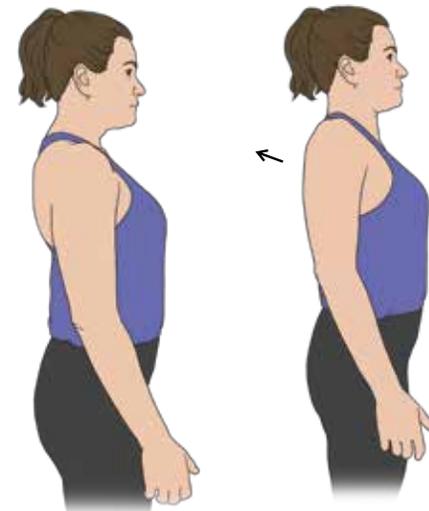
## ACTIVITY 02

### SHOULDER ROLLS

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With the same good posture, roll your shoulders backwards, then relax.

REPEAT 10 - 30 TIMES.  
DO 1 - 3 TIMES A DAY.

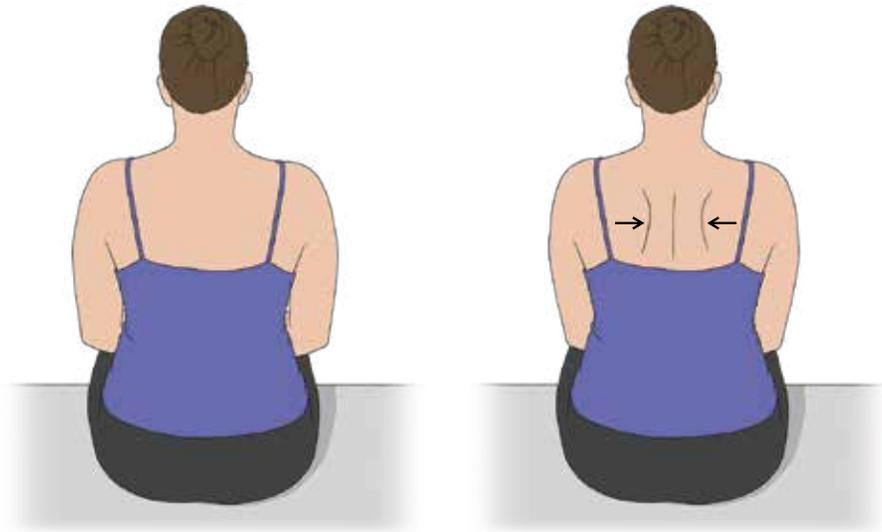


ACTIVITY 03

## SHOULDER BLADE SQUEEZES

Squeeze your shoulder blades together but keep your neck relaxed.

HOLD FOR 5 SECONDS,  
REPEAT 30 TIMES.  
DO 1 - 3 TIMES A DAY.



ACTIVITY 04

## SPREAD EAGLE

Stand against the wall with your head, shoulders and back resting on the wall. With your palms facing forward, bring your arms up the wall and extend them out to each side as shown. Move your arms as high as you can.

HOLD FOR 30 SECONDS.  
REPEAT 2-5 TIMES.  
DO 1-3 TIMES A DAY.



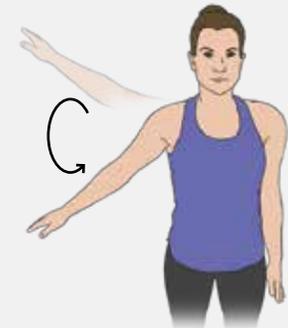
ACTIVITY 05

## ARM CIRCLES

Stand in the middle of the room where you have space to make big circles with your arms.

1. Circle 10 times forward.
2. Circle 10 times backward.

DO 1-3 TIMES A DAY.  
REPEAT 1-3 TIMES A DAY.

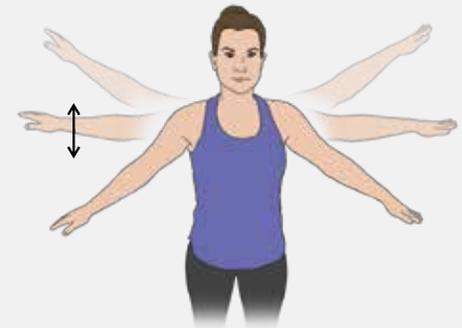


ACTIVITY 06

## ARM FLAPPING

Wave your arms up and down 10 times.

DO 1-3 TIMES A DAY.  
REPEAT 1-3 TIMES A DAY.



# RANGE OF MOTION

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You will be able to gently turn to look to the left and to the right soon after surgery. It is not necessary to force the motion as the normal motion returns with time. You will also be able to look down to eat, tie your shoes, etc.

Your surgeon may limit your range of motion after a multi-level fusion while you are in the healing phase.

After the first few weeks, you might find it easier to use a towel to help guide the motion. Sit comfortably on a sturdy chair. Roll up a large towel lengthwise and place the roll around your neck. Use both hands to assist the motion of looking up, looking to the left, and looking to the right. Again, the motion does not need to be forced.



# STRENGTHENING EXERCISES

Your physician will guide you and let you know when you are cleared to return to weightlifting or resistance exercises. You are usually restricted to lifting very little in the first month, and about the weight of a half-gallon of milk (about 4 pounds) in the second month. A full gallon weighs about 8 pounds, and this is not recommended until 8 - 12 weeks.

As you build up your exercise endurance, you will be ready for normal resistance exercises, yoga, etc.

Here are some examples of exercises you can start with after your physician has cleared you:

## ACTIVITY 01

### BILATERAL ROWS

Stand (or sit on the edge of a chair). Keep your back straight, shoulders relaxed, and head in line with your shoulders. Secure resistance band into door or tied to the door handle. Hold band with both hands out in front of you, palms down. Pull back bending elbows and squeezing shoulder blades together. Return to starting position and repeat.

**DO 10 - 30 REPS.  
REPEAT 1- 3 TIMES A DAY.**



#### Other Resistance Exercises:

If you want to use resistance bands to strengthen your arms, start by doing the exercises with your neck fully relaxed, like lying down or sitting with your head rested against a high back chair, etc.

Keep your chin slightly tucked, stay looking straight ahead and your neck and shoulders in a straight line. You might have to start working in the mid range at first to eliminate strain on your neck. Start with the lightest resistance and gradually work up to heavier resistance.

Remember, your healing in the first few months is more important than your strength. Your strength will continue to improve over time.







GOODMAN CAMPBELL  
BRAIN AND SPINE

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