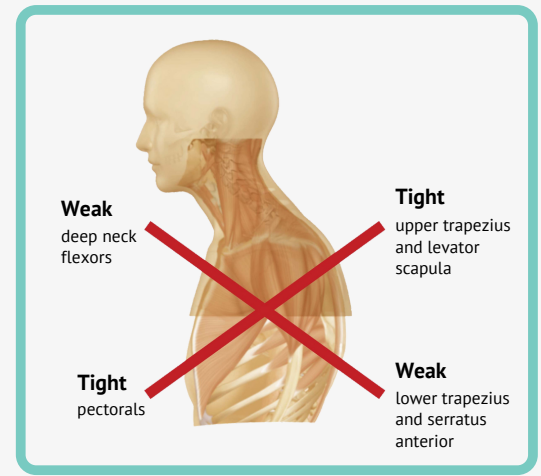


# UPPER CROSSED SYNDROME

## "FORWARD HEAD POSTURE"

Your posture plays an important role in your overall health. Poor posture leads to chronic strain and discomfort. "Upper Crossed Syndrome" describes poor posture that results from excessive tightness in your shoulders and chest with weakness in your neck and mid-back. This combination forces your shoulders to roll inward and your head to project forward.



To help understand how upper crossed syndrome causes trouble, think of your spine as a post and your head as a bowling ball that sits on top. When the bowling ball is positioned directly over the top of the upright post, very little effort is required to keep it in place. If you tip the post forward and the ball begins to roll over the edge of the post, significantly more effort would be required from the muscles trying to hold it there. This effort results in the chronic strain of the muscles of your neck and upper back.

## FIXING UPPER CROSSED SYNDROME

Correction of upper crossed syndrome is accomplished by stretching the tight muscles, strengthening weak muscles, modifying your workstation, and choosing the right pillow.



### Workstation Ergonomics

- Monitors should be visible without leaning forward and the top line of type should be 15 degrees below eye level.
- Keep your shoulders relaxed and elbows bent to 90 degrees.
- Periodically, perform the "Brugger relief position" - Position your body at a chair's edge, feet pointed outward. Weight should be on your legs and your abdomen should be relaxed. Tilt your pelvis forward, lift your sternum, arch your back, drop your arms, and roll out your palms while squeezing your shoulders together. Take a few deep cleansing breaths.



### Pillow Selection

- Select a pillow that will hold your head in a neutral position while sleeping on your side or back.
- Avoid excessively thick or multiple pillows.
- Choose a fiberfill or feather/down pillow as these are usually better than foam.
- Consider a commercially available pillow that promotes optimal neck posture.

# HOME EXERCISES

## Stretching



### Corner Pectoral Stretch

Begin standing, facing a corner with your palms on the walls above head level. Step toward the corner and "lean in" to stretch your chest muscles. Against the resistance of the wall, attempt to push your hands into the wall and toward each other for 7 seconds. Relax and "lean in" to increase the stretch. Lock into this new position and repeat 3 contract/ relax cycles, twice per day or as directed.



### Levator Stretch

While sitting, grasp the seat of your chair with your left hand. Rotate your head toward the right and look downward toward the floor. Place your right hand over the top of your head and gently pull down and diagonally in the direction you are looking. Against the resistance of your hand, contract your neck in an attempt to push your head backward/diagonally from the direction you are looking for seven seconds. Relax and gently pull your head further toward the floor to increase the stretch. Lock into this new position, and make sure that you continue to keep your head rotated in the direction that you are pulling.

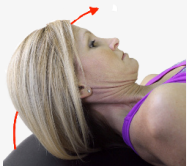


### Cervical Retractions

Sit or stand looking forward with good posture. Tuck your chin to create a double chin. Hold this position for 3-5 seconds. Return to the starting position. Place a finger on your chin, and apply backward pressure at end range. Perform 1 set of 10 repetitions 3-10 times per day. Alternately, this exercise may be performed standing with your back against a wall. Your buttocks and shoulder blades should be in contact with the wall. Tuck your chin to make a "double chin" until the base of your skull contacts the wall, relax and repeat as directed.

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## Strengthening



### Deep Neck Flexion

Lie on your back, with your head supported. Perform a "chin tuck" by retracting your head to create a double chin. Lift your head, bringing your chin toward your chest without lifting shoulders- as though you are looking at your toes. Hold this position for 3-4 seconds. Lower your head and relax. Keep your teeth apart during exercise to decrease straining at the jaw. Perform as directed.



### YTWL Scapular Depression

Stand with your straight arms raised above your head in a "Y" position. Squeeze your shoulder blades together and downward throughout the following sequence of movements. Lower your straightened arms to shoulder level, into a "T" position. Next, bend your elbows so that your fingers are pointing straight up while slightly lowering your elbows to make a "W". Finally, while keeping your elbows bent 90 degrees, lower your arms to your sides so that your elbows are touching your ribs to form an "L" on each side and squeeze. Hold each position for 1-2 seconds.



### Low Row

Attach the center of an elastic exercise band to a doorknob or other sturdy object in front of you. Grasp one end of the band in each hand and with straight arms at your side, stretch the band backward. Keep your palms facing backward and arms pointed straight down throughout the exercise. Return to neutral and repeat 3 sets of 10 repetitions daily, or as directed.

*\*Do not begin any exercises without consulting your chiropractor or therapist. Exercises should be performed slowly and within a relatively comfortable range. Maintain good posture and breathe naturally. Do not hold your breath. Unless otherwise instructed, stop any exercises that cause pain, or radiating symptoms.*