



051: Injury Prevention – Neck

Why this is important

A neck injury can leave you paralyzed.

Neck problems are painful, debilitating, and sometimes disfiguring.

Neck facts

The neck has the job of supporting an object similar in size and weight to a bowling ball, while providing a significant range of motion.

The neck is made up of connective tissue and many small bones. It is a true marvel of nature, but it is easily damaged.

Acute injury prevention

Your hardhat acts like a shock absorber. If you are wearing it when you sustain a head impact, the hat will reduce how much shock your neck must absorb.

When in a motor vehicle, adjust your headrest properly. The headrest should allow the back of your head to strike it. If the headrest is too low, the whiplash to your neck could be sufficient to break it.

Wear your seat belt when in a motor vehicle. There is less injury to your neck if your seat belt holds you in place than when the full weight of your body drives your face through the windshield. Wearing your seat belt can—literally and figuratively—save your neck.

Strain prevention

Vary your activity or position so your neck doesn't stay in one position as you work. For example, if you are working on a ladder, occasionally move up higher or lower in relation to your work so you can hold your neck at a different angle.

Watch your posture. Most people crane their necks, so the backs of their necks curve inward. If you stand against a wall so your heels touch the base of it, your butt, shoulder, and head should also touch it. If the back of your neck touches the wall, you have bad posture. The bottom of your jaw should be parallel with the ground.

Disc protection

Don't smoke. Smoking reduces blood flow to the spinal disks and other tissues in the neck. These tissues need oxygen from the blood to stay healthy. In addition to getting less blood if you smoke, the blood these tissues do get is loaded with carbon monoxide and over 500 known carcinogens.

Smoking is also the leading cause of carotid artery restriction. The carotid artery feeds the brain. Surgery to correct a restriction means cutting into your neck, and the risk of permanent neck damage is always present. Plus, carotid artery surgery leaves a highly visible set of scars.

Exercise your neck muscles by pushing gently to the front, back, and sides—against resistance you provide with your hands.

Stretch your neck muscles. Rotate your head and gently go as far as your neck will allow.

Discussion leader duties for this session:

Find a section of wall where a crew member or two can demonstrate posture checking as a neck injury preventive measure.

What this Safety Talk covers:

Taking care of your neck.

Discussion notes :

