HEALTH BY SCIENCE

The Ultimate Neck Pain Relief Guide

An evidence-based, step-by-step roadmap to go from stiff and sore to strong and mobile.

Phase 1

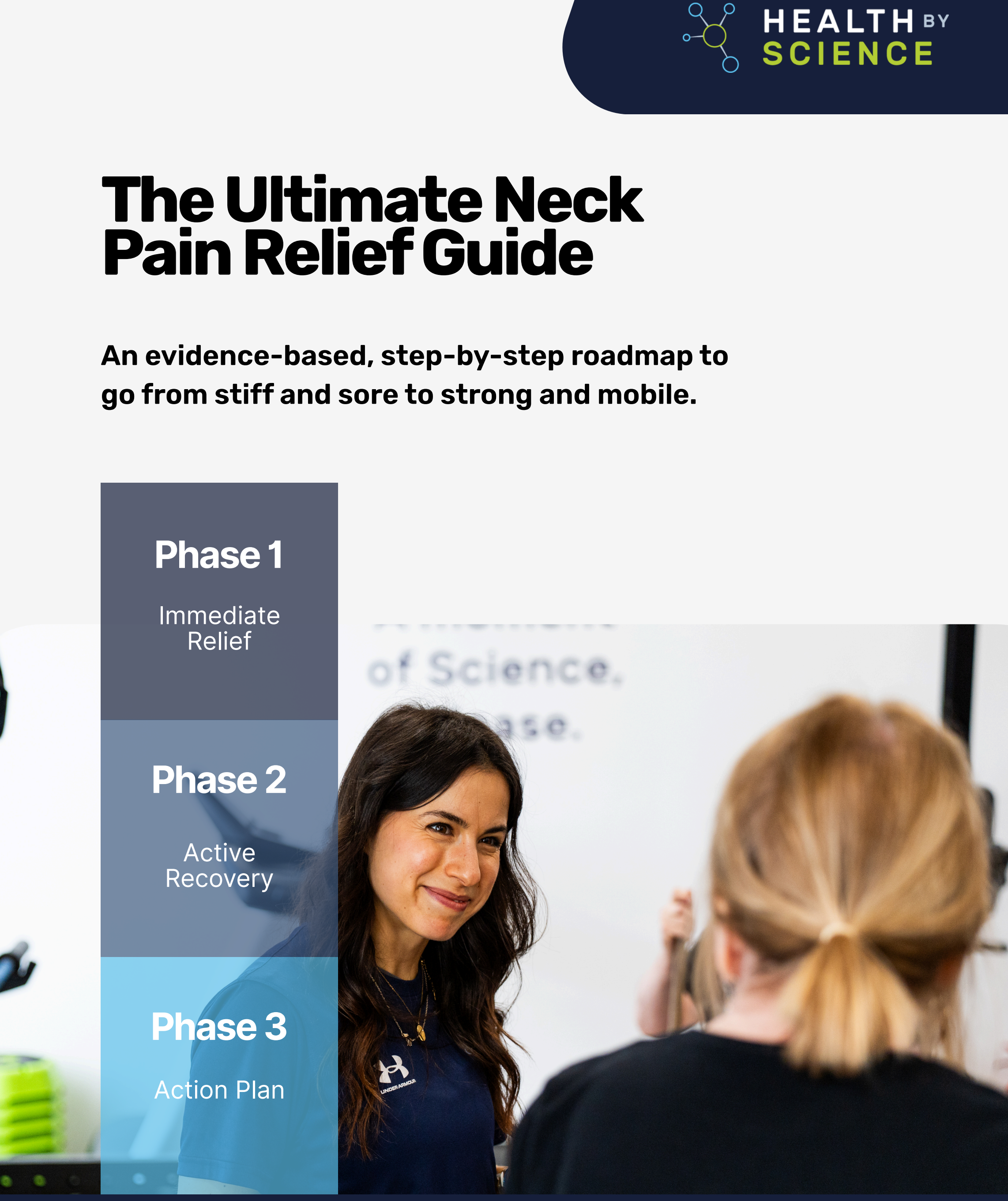
Immediate Relief

Phase 2

Active Recovery

Phase 3

Action Plan



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WELCOME

If you’re reading this, your neck is likely giving you grief. Whether you slept funny, tweaked it at the gym, or are dealing with a desk-work flare-up, neck pain is exhausting. But here is the good news: your neck is incredibly robust. By following the modern PEACE & LOVE recovery protocol, we can get you moving freely again.

Free Online Physio Booking

IMPORTANT: WHEN TO SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ADVICE

Safety first. The PEACE & LOVE protocol and the exercises in this guide are designed for typical, mechanical neck pain—like a muscle tweak, tension from a desk job, or waking up with a stiff neck. However, this guide does not replace professional medical advice.

While rare, neck pain can sometimes be a symptom of a more serious underlying issue. If you experience any of the following "Red Flag" symptoms, stop these exercises immediately and consult a doctor or local healthcare provider:

- **Recent Trauma**: Your neck pain started immediately after a high-impact event, such as a car accident, a severe fall, or a direct blow to the head.
- **Radiating Symptoms**: You feel shooting pain, tingling, "pins and needles," or numbness traveling down your arm and into your hands or fingers.
- **Sudden Weakness**: You are experiencing noticeable weakness in your arms or sudden clumsiness in your hands (e.g., frequently dropping objects).
- **Systemic Illness**: Your neck pain is accompanied by an unexplained fever, chills, nausea, or rapid, unexplained weight loss.
- **Severe Headache & Stiffness**: You have a sudden, agonizing headache combined with a highly rigid neck (an inability to bend your chin forward to your chest).
- **Unrelenting Night Pain**: Your pain does not change regardless of how you move, it never eases up, and it consistently wakes you up from deep sleep.

When in doubt, get it checked out. If you aren't sure whether your symptoms are standard muscle tension or something more serious, don't guess. **[Book a FREE online consultation with our physiotherapy team]** to get a professional, comprehensive assessment.

Phase 1: Give Your Neck P.E.A.C.E. (DAYS 1-3)

PROTECT

P



Avoid movements that recreate sharp, shooting pain. It's okay to feel stiffness, but don't force through agonizing ranges of motion during the first 48 hours.

ELEVATE

E



Since we can't "elevate" a neck like an ankle, focus on your resting posture. Support your neck while sleeping with a contour pillow, ensuring your head stays in a neutral position (not cranked up or dropping down).

AVOID ANTI-INFLAMMATORIES

A



Put the ibuprofen down! Inflammation is your body’s natural, necessary healing response. Blocking it with NSAIDs or ice can actually delay long-term tissue repair.

COMPRESS

C



You cannot wrap a neck, but you can provide gentle manual support. If your neck feels unstable, gently cup the back of your neck with your hands for comfort. Avoid rigid neck collars unless a doctor prescribes them.

EDUCATE

E



Your body knows how to heal. Avoid falling down the rabbit hole of unnecessary medical scans (like MRIs) for standard neck tweaks, and stay away from aggressive, passive treatments. Active recovery is the goal.

Phase 2: Show Your Neck L.O.V.E. (DAYS 4+)

L — LOAD



It's time to start moving. Let your symptoms be your guide—mild discomfort is safe, but sharp pain is a red flag. Your body will signal when it's ready for the exercises on the next page.

O — OPTIMISM



The brain plays a massive role in how we feel pain. Fear and anxiety actually amplify pain signals. Trust that soft tissue injuries heal, and stay positive about your recovery.

V — VASCULARISATION



Get your heart pumping! Go for a brisk, pain-free walk or use a stationary bike. Increasing your blood flow delivers vital oxygen and nutrients to the repairing tissues in your neck.

E — EXERCISE



The ultimate cure. Restoring mobility, strength, and proprioception is how you bulletproof your neck against future flare-ups.

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LEVEL 1 DAILY NECK REHAB ROUTINE

Start slow, breathe deeply, and never push into sharp pain. Click any image to view the video tutorial.

- Level 1: Neck Resistance Presses
- Backwards Resisted Press
- Forward Resisted Press
- Side Resisted Press

WHY DO IT?

This fires up the neck muscles without actually moving the joints, making it highly effective for pain relief.



Backwards Resisted Press



Forward Resisted Press



Side Resisted Press

HOW TO DO IT?

Use your hand to apply gentle resistance against your head. Push into your hand, matching the pressure so your head doesn't move. Hold for 5 seconds.

PRESCRIPTION

Start with 5 reps per direction. Once you can comfortably complete 15 reps with zero sharp pain, graduate to Level 2.

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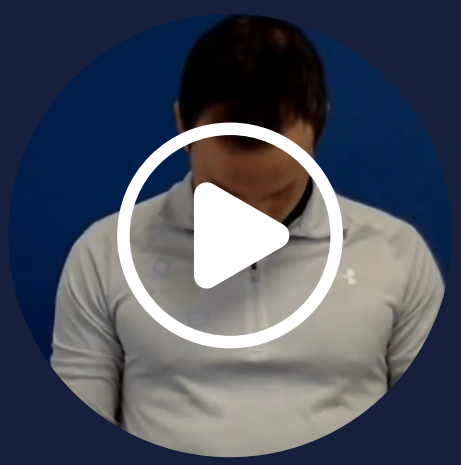
LEVEL 2 DAILY NECK REHAB ROUTINE

Start slow, breathe deeply, and never push into sharp pain. Click any image to view the video tutorial.

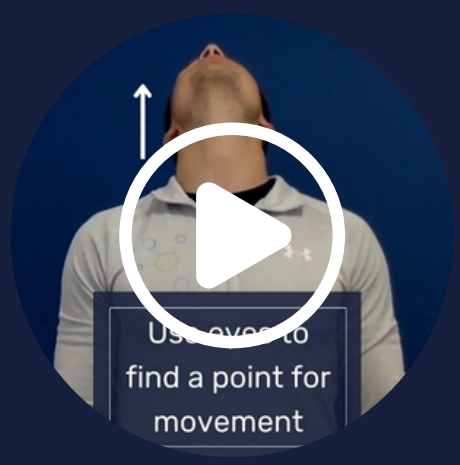
- Level 2: Neck Mobility
- Neck Flexion
- Neck Extension
- Head Rotation
- Neck Side Bend

WHY DO IT?

To lubricate the joints and restore your natural range of motion.



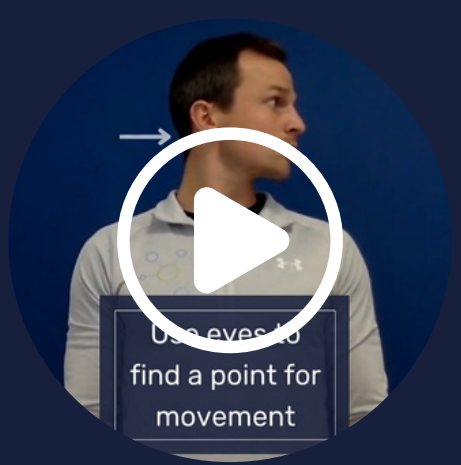
Neck Flexion



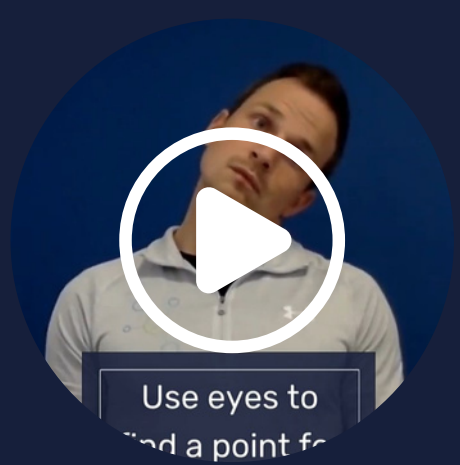
Neck Extension

HOW TO DO IT?

Tip: Use your eyes to guide the movement! Look down as you tuck your chin, and look up as you extend. Move slowly and smoothly.



Head Rotation



Neck Side Bend

PRESCRIPTION

Start with 5 slow reps.
Build up to 15 continuous, comfortable repetitions.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS PART 1:

Your Neck Pain, Answered

Q: Why do I keep waking up with a stiff neck?
A: Waking up with a "crick" in your neck is incredibly common. It usually happens when your neck is held in an awkward, sustained position for hours.

- **The Fix:** Check your pillow. It should fill the gap between your head and your mattress so your neck stays in a neutral, straight line. Avoid sleeping on your stomach, as this forces your neck into end-range rotation all night.

Q: My desk job is killing my neck. Is there a "perfect" posture?
A: The truth is, your best posture is your next posture. "Tech neck" or desk-related pain usually isn't caused by sitting perfectly "wrong"—it's caused by not moving enough.

- **The Fix:** Your neck thrives on movement. Instead of obsessing over sitting perfectly straight, focus on taking micro-breaks. Every 45 minutes, perform a few reps of the Level 2 Neck Mobility exercises from this guide to lubricate the joints and reset the muscles.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS PART 2:

Your Neck Pain, Answered

Q: Should I use heat or ice on a sore neck?
A: As mentioned in the PEACE & LOVE protocol, we recommend avoiding ice. While ice numbs the area, it also constricts blood vessels and delays the natural inflammatory healing process.

- **The Fix:** Heat, on the other hand, can be your friend! A warm shower or a heat pack can encourage blood flow (Vascularisation) and help relax tight, spasming muscles around the neck and shoulders.

Q: How long does a typical stiff neck last?
A: Most acute, mechanical neck pain (like a muscle tweak from the gym or sleeping awkwardly) will significantly improve within 3 to 7 days if you follow the PEACE & LOVE framework.

- **The Fix:** If your pain hasn't budged after two weeks, or if it keeps coming back, it’s time to stop guessing. This is a clear sign you need a tailored rehab plan. [Click here to book a Physio Assessment] so we can find the root cause.

Q: Should I be aggressively stretching my neck to get rid of the stiffness?
A: No! When your neck is in pain, the muscles often spasm and tighten up to protect the area. Yanking on your neck with aggressive stretches just pisses off an already sensitive nervous system.

- **The Fix:** Swap passive stretching for the active Level 1 Isometrics in this guide. Contracting the muscles gently without moving the joints is a much safer, evidence-based way to signal to your brain that the area is safe to relax.

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THE NEXT STEP

Ready to Fix Your Neck Pain for Good?

You now have the exact framework to manage immediate neck pain and kickstart your recovery. But while the PEACE & LOVE protocol and these foundational exercises are a fantastic starting point, generic routines can only take you so far.

If your pain is lingering, if you're unsure about your exercise technique, or if you simply want a tailored plan to fix the root cause and stop this from happening again—we are here to help. Everybody is different, and sometimes you just need an expert eye.

CHOOSE HOW YOU WANT TO RECOVER:

Online Physiotherapy Consultations (Available Anywhere) We can assess your movement, modify your exercises, and build a custom rehab program entirely online. Get expert guidance from the comfort of your own home, no matter where you are in the world. BOOK HERE

In-Person Physiotherapy (Edinburgh) Local to Edinburgh? Come and see us at the Health by Science (98 Giles Street). We'll provide a hands-on assessment, help you release stubborn tension, and guide you through your rehab face-to-face in our dedicated space. BOOK HERE