

Reduction of Risk Factors

- There are certain things that need to be done or avoided to help alleviate scalene muscle problems. These include:
- Avoiding carrying, pulling or tugging awkward packages
 - Avoid lifting the head when rolling over in bed
 - Avoid using glasses that have a thick lower rim
 - Avoid turning just the head to hear someone with your better ear. Turn your entire body or wear your hearing aide.
 - Use an appropriate elbow rest. One that meets your elbow, but does not cause you shoulders to ride up around your ears...
 - Reading lights should shine directly on reading material and not from an angle, which causes you to turn toward the light.
 - Elevate the head of the bed 3-3 _ inches using books or blocks under the bedposts. This may need to be more if there is a carpet under the foot of the bed and not the head of the bed.
 - Use one pillow that is not foam rubber or does not have a springy action that causes a jiggle.
 - Keep your neck and shoulders warm at night.

Lying on your back, place the hand of the affected side under your buttocks palm up. Use your other hand to reach over your head and grab just above the ear of the affected side. Place your neck into a sidebending stretch using your head placed hand to smoothly draw your head toward the unaffected side. Take a deep diaphragmatic breath feel the tension mount in your head placed hand, upon exhalation follow the relaxation of your neck into further sidebending. Repeat this 3-6 times and make sure the other side is stretched to equality. Do this exercise 3 times a day.

Different muscles can be stretched depending upon the amount of head rotation that you perform. If the head is not rotated the middle scalenes will be stretched (figure A). With head rotation towards the affected side the anterior scalenes will be stretched (figure B). And, with head rotation away from the affected side the posterior scalenes will be stretched (figure C). The anterior, middle and posterior scalenes should all be stretched to equality.



Diaphragmatic - "Belly" Breathing

Sometimes, after a surgery or for those of us who hold our bellies in while breathing we teach ourselves incorrectly how to breathe. The following exercise will help us relearn the correct way to breathe and can be done in any position, but only laying and seated positions will be reviewed here. Practice this 2-4 times a day and at bedtime.

In the laying on the back position, place a hand on you stomach below your belly button and the other hand on your chest. Take a slow, deliberate deep breath and feel your chest and your belly rise together and after a slight pause allow them to fall together. Spend a couple of minutes breathing in this manner (20-30 breaths). Now, practice belly breathing. Taking a deep breath and focusing it all through your tummy, with relatively little chest movement is the practice of belly breathing. Do this for a couple of minutes in a relaxed manner until it feels quite natural. Belly breathing should be your natural way of breathing when lying flat on your back.

In the seated position with a firm flat seat, stick your belly out and arch your back while taking a slow deep breath. Then, allow yourself to slouch as you exhale in a relaxed manner. This exercise reinforces belly breathing in a more upright position. If you are having a hard time mastering it take a belt and fix it around your chest to reinforce the use of your abdomen and not your chest to breath.

While lying on your unaffected side, lift your head and look away from the table/bed while taking a deep inhalation (figure A). Hold your breath for a count of five and, while exhaling, allow your head to sink back towards the table/bed (figure B). Repeat this exercise 3 times. Makes sure the other side is equally loose. Perform this exercise 3 times a day.

Gravity Self-Stretch



Self-Stretch