

Whiplash: Early Movement Sheet

A printable early movement sheet for whiplash - comfortable neck mobility, returning to normal activity, and the warning signs that need care.

At a Glance

- Gentle movement and a gradual return to normal activity are usually encouraged
- Symptoms can change during the first few days after the injury
- Recovery varies, but many people improve over the following weeks to months
- Confidence and comfortable movement are useful parts of recovery

Gentle Movement Routine

If you have been assessed and movement is appropriate, try these slowly within a comfortable range. Begin with a small number of repetitions and adjust the frequency to your response:

1. Neck rotation: turn the head gently side to side, 5-8 times each way.
2. Side bend: bring each ear toward the shoulder, 5-8 times each side.
3. Chin tucks: glide the chin back (like making a double chin), hold 3 seconds, repeat 5 times.
4. Shoulder rolls: 8 slow rolls backward, then forward.

Return to Normal Activity

- Go back to work and usual routines as soon as reasonably possible
- Keep the neck moving during the day - change position regularly
- Sleep in a comfortable position; a rolled towel under the neck can help
- Walk and stay generally active

Do This

- Move gently within comfort as tolerated
- Use heat or a warm shower for stiffness if it feels good
- Add light strengthening (neck isometrics) as pain settles
- Keep a normal routine and pace yourself

Avoid This

- Prolonged use of a neck collar unless a clinician has specifically advised it
- Avoiding all neck movement because it hurts
- Staying off work and resting for long periods
- Repeatedly checking how much the neck hurts

When to Seek Urgent Care

Seek urgent care for arm or leg weakness, numbness, difficulty walking, loss of bladder or bowel control, severe headache, vision changes, or pain that keeps worsening after a high-force injury.

References

1. "The Treatment of Neck Pain-Associated Disorders and Whiplash-Associated Disorders: A Clinical Practice Guideline." 2016. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27836071/>
2. "The nosological classification of whiplash-associated disorder: a narrative review." 2021. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8128336/>

This information is for education only and is not a medical diagnosis. InjuryAtlas does not replace an assessment by a qualified health professional. If you have severe pain, visible deformity, numbness, loss of function, or symptoms that are getting worse, seek medical care promptly.