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Multi-Med Center
Dr. David Taylor, D.C.
74 Main St
Greenfield, MA 01301
USA
<http://www.taylorchiro.com>
dntaylordc@comcast.net
(413) 774-7501



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To: Dr. David Taylor

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[Get Rid of Neck Pain](#)



In general, there is no one cause of neck pain that applies to every patient. If you have chronic neck pain, you may have received a diagnosis of disc herniation, whiplash, strain, sprain or something else. Regardless, most of these conditions have one thing in common: Certain muscles are affected, and these are the muscles we need to target before progressing to more challenging exercises or activities.

There are certain muscles in the neck that are designed to help us maintain our normal and healthy curve of the spine. In addition, these muscles are designed to hold our head up all day. The technical names of these muscles are the *longus capitus* and *longus colli*, more commonly known as the deep neck flexors. They are the muscles that attach to the front of your spine. Because they're located deep in the front of the neck, we often ignore them.

In people with chronic neck pain, these muscles are often fatigued a lot quicker than in people without neck pain. That means other muscles pick up the slack and begin working harder. The muscles that begin working harder are the ones we generally end up stretching. Have you ever noticed that when you stretch stiff muscles, they feel good for a short period of time, only to get tight again? The thing is, if you don't address the other muscles, the ones that get fatigued and gradually stop working, then your stretching program will not work as well. All these muscles need to be in "balance."

The best way to see if your deep neck flexors fatigue is to try and lift your head off the ground when you are lying down. The technique is simple: Simply tuck your chin in to your chest and lift your head off the ground, and then attempt to hold it there for 10 seconds. If the neck begins shaking, or your chin is unable to stay tucked in, your deep flexors are fatigued and need to be addressed. For most people with chronic neck pain, this can be a difficult exercise. That's why you can begin your exercise program by doing simple chin tucks while sitting or standing.

Simply tucking your chin in and holding it until you fatigue will help reactivate these muscles. You can start with 12 repetitions of this exercise, working your way up to three sets of 12 repetitions each. Ensure you take adequate rest (several minutes) in between each set.

Once you get comfortable with basic sitting/standing chin tucks, you can try doing the exercise lying down. The goal is to be able to do it 12 times, holding each one until you fatigue. The next goal is to work your way up to three sets of 12 repetitions, with rest in between each set. Then work your way to three sets of 15 repetitions and then three sets of 20 repetitions. Remember, this is a marathon, not a race. The goal is to increase the endurance of your muscles rather than their strength. Your neck is designed to carry the weight of your head all day, not to lift trains or buses! That's why building up endurance should be your first priority.

Neck pain is an all-too-common condition that can prove debilitating if left untreated; fortunately, your chiropractor is the perfect health care professional to help you get rid of the pain.

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The Power of Protein

The word *protein* is of Greek origin, from the word *proteios*, which means "of prime importance," and when it comes to the human diet, protein's importance cannot be understated. Examples of proteins in our bodies that make life possible are hormones, enzymes, muscles, tendons, cartilage and other types of structural tissues and transport molecules. Proteins are constructed as long chains of amino acids, of which there are eight that must be provided by the food we eat. They are called "essential" because our bodies cannot make them. If our food lacks enough of even one of these eight essential amino acids, then the body will have a harder time making new proteins.



Why does the body need new proteins? Because our body's protein tissues wear out on a regular basis and must be repaired and replaced. This replacement process is accomplished by eating foods that contain protein. After eating protein, the digestive system breaks it down into a brand new supply of amino acids that become the building blocks that are used in repairing and replacing those that are worn out.

Most animal-based foods can be used very efficiently by our body because they have the right amounts of each essential amino acid, and therefore are often referred to as "high quality." Among animal foods, the proteins of milk and eggs represent the best amino-acid matches for our body and thus are considered the highest quality. Plant proteins are often referred to as "lower quality" because some individual vegetables may have a low level of one or more of the essential amino acids (although as a group plant-based proteins do contain all eight essential amino acids).

It would be great if the highest quality protein equaled the greatest health, but it doesn't, and that's why the term *quality* is misleading. In fact, compelling research shows that "low-quality" plant-based protein, which allows for slow but steady repair of new body tissues, is the healthiest type of protein. Chronic inflammatory conditions exist in millions of Americans who eat too much dietary animal protein. Just consider the number of allergy-related symptoms attributed to consumption of milk-based protein (milk, cheese, etc.) and the cholesterol- and fat-related conditions caused by consumption of eggs and red meat.

When it comes to protein, don't fool yourself, "fuel" yourself. Build a protein-based breakfast into your morning breakfast routine and make sure you get protein throughout the day. Remember, don't overload on animal-based protein; small amounts of lean meat like chicken, turkey or fish are OK (4 ounces a day at most), but make sure plant proteins form the staple of your diet. You'll look better, feel better and improve your quality of life, all at the same time. Talk to your doctor for more information.

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Backpack Safety Tips



Do you know what's in your child's backpack, how much it weighs, or how that weight is affecting their neck, shoulders, back and spine? You need to know, because studies suggest far too many children are carrying far too heavy loads to and from school, and with serious consequences.

For example, a 2003 study in *Spine* found a significant relationship between the incidence of lower back pain among schoolchildren (ages 12-18) and both the weight of their backpacks and the amount of time the backpacks were used. Some backpacks were inordinately heavy; 18.9 percent of the students surveyed carried backpacks that weighed more than *20 percent* of the student's body weight when full.

In another study, published in the same journal a year earlier, four of five children said their backpacks were heavy, and two-thirds said they felt fatigue when carrying theirs. The study also showed that lifetime prevalence of low back pain was related to the amount of time children carried backpacks on their shoulders.

Not very good news, is it? So, what can you do as a parent to help your children in this regard? Here are a few simple suggestions courtesy of National University of Health Sciences in Lombard, Ill.:

- Make sure your child's backpack weighs no more than 10 percent of their body weight.
- Also ensure that it doesn't hang more than 4 inches below their waistline.
- Urge your child to wear both shoulder straps. The straps should be adjustable so the backpack can be easily fitted to your child's body.

Improper backpack use is an important but often-overlooked cause of back pain. Your chiropractor can evaluate your child's backpack and provide additional suggestions on how to ensure your child goes to and from school every day without putting their spine at risk of injury.

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This newsletter was sent from Multi-Med Center, Dr. David Taylor, D.C. - 74 Main St,
Greenfield, MA 01301, USA