

## Neck Stability Exercises with a Ball

The purpose of exercising with an exercise ball is to help stabilize the cervical spine and strengthen the muscles supporting your neck. When the ligaments of your neck are “too loose” from injury, “just the way you are,” or from how you have used your neck at work and play then often times the neck muscles will be compromised. While the neck vertebral joints may move too much sometimes the muscles will tense to create greater stability or become weak and make holding your neck up, a chore.

By exercising on a regular basis you will increase the strength, coordination and function of your neck as well as hold your adjustments for longer periods of time. These exercises, when performed regularly, will both improve your neck’s range of motion as well as helping to develop greater stability. A few simple rules are this; use proper technique, don’t lean with your body, just roll with your head. If there is any discomfort, stop and reevaluate your position, how much force you are using, consider resting or stopping the exercise for that day.

It is very important that you do not exercise into pain or fatigue and that the focus is ongoing exercise that gradually helps your develop greater neck stability. It is better to do less and feel like you didn’t do enough rather than risk overdoing it and hurting yourself. If you are not sure always do less and wait to do some more the next day. Take note if one position is harder than the other or if any cause you pain, since this may be important information, however if the exercise continues to cause you discomfort do not continue but call Dr. Blum to discuss your condition.

### **Exercise #1:** (This exercise works the muscles in the front of your neck.)

Stand about one foot away from the wall you are facing, holding the ball at the center of your forehead, and gently pushing forward. This is called the neutral position.

1. Roll your forehead down towards your chest, (the ball will roll up your forehead). Don’t let the ball roll off.
2. Now raise your head up so that the ball is rolling down your forehead towards your nose. When you are at eye level bring your head down and over as if you wanted to look towards your right shoulder. Follow that line back to the neutral position.
3. Now look down to the left shoulder. These three steps make one set. Optimally do ten sets, but initially start with just three. Be gentle, the idea is to stimulate the muscles and joints not to stress or fatigue them. Take little steps and allow it to become easy as you do this each day. No one will get hurt doing this exercise because they were too gentle or only gradually increased the amount of time and repetitions.



Neck flexion exercise  
with ball



Neck extension exercise  
with ball



Neck rotation exercise  
with ball

**Exercise #2:** (This exercise works the muscles on the sides of your neck.)

Turn your body so that your shoulder is toward the wall and you are standing up straight. Place the ball just above your ear, while pressing lightly, this is the neutral position. You may want to use your hand to steady the ball.

1. Roll your head as if touching your ear to your shoulder, then return up to the neutral position.
2. From the neutral position then roll your head up and away from your shoulder. Take care to remain standing up straight, don't let your hips and shoulders sway in and out from the wall; just your neck is doing the work. To start, repeat this three times (optimally over time building up to ten repetitions) and then turn and do the other side.



Neck side-bending with ball in neutral position



Neck side-bending with ball rolling away from ear



Neck side-bending with ball rolling toward the ear

**Exercise #3:** (This may be the most important neck exercise you will perform since it works the back area of the neck muscles.)

Turn your back to the wall with your feet shoulder width apart and about 6 -12 inches from the wall. Place the ball just above the base of your skull (against the little bump on the back of your head). At this point you are going to draw a “W” with your head, doing the center of the “W” first. Press back gently against the ball.

1. Look straight up at the ceiling bringing your head up as far as you can go.
2. Next roll your head down so your chin is nearly to your chest.
3. Now bring your head up again while looking to the right at a 45-degree angle (think of bringing your right ear towards your right shoulder while bringing your head back).
4. Bring your head back down to neutral position (chin to chest) then
5. Roll up 45 degrees to the left and then ...
6. Return to the neutral position. This is one repetition. Do this initially three times building up gradually to ten repetitions.



Neck in flexion with ball behind the head



Neck in extension with ball behind the head



Neck in 45° extension with ball behind the head