

Neck Rolls

Level 1 / Posture 31

Benefits: Loosen & relieve tension in neck and shoulders.

Time to do: 30 seconds – 2 minutes

Warms You Up for / Builds You Up for: Poses using neck and shoulders; like Pelvic Lift, Back Bends, Elbow to Knee 1 & 2, Side Stretches, Side Bends, Triangle Poses, Twists, Shoulder Stand, Plow.

Try Doing First: Neck Stretch 1

Try Following With: Neck Presses

Best Breathing Theme: *First, Second and Fifth Breathing Theme, Yellow Level Breathing Themes*



Rolling your neck around. That should be easy and straightforward, right? Sorry. Not so simple. Your neck is one area of your body that is easily injured from misuse. So it's important to pay attention to how to do neck stretches and neck rolls properly. It also means that it's important to *do* neck rolls, to keep your neck loose and limber for the demands you place on it during the day. Neck stretch and neck rolls are an important warm up before doing poses that use the neck – and they're a great break at the office. The more you combine these with the Breathing Themes, the more you'll get out of them. Use Yellow Level Breathing Themes to loosen your neck; the *Fifth Breathing Theme* to build strength and to get deep tension relief. The *First* and *Second Breathing Themes* will help you relax and let go when your neck is very tense.

Yoga Snack

Do Neck Rolls any time, anywhere! They are a great, quick tension reliever. Just be sure your neck and spine are lined up with each other before you begin.



Start

Standing, sitting, even lying down.
Chin pointing forward.

Safety Tip Be sure your neck and spine are lined up with each other. This will keep you from straining the muscles.



Draw your chin forward.

(Like a chicken or a pigeon does when they walk.) (Sorry for the unflattering comparison!)



Stretch your chin forward and down.



On a good day, it will reach your chest.
Hold your chin in place there.

Take a breath to relax your shoulders.
As you breathe out, allow your shoulders to drop down.



(You'll notice this increases the stretch a bit. Don't force the stretch in your neck. Just stay focused on how your shoulders naturally drop down as you breathe out – this will let things just naturally happen by themselves.)

Each time you breathe out, feel your chest dropping. Allow your chin to drop farther down – following your chest as it drops.

You'll feel the stretch in your neck increasing.

Once you've hit your limit

You'll feel a lot of resistance in your neck to dropping down further. You'll feel as if, any more stretching, and your muscles will start to burn or feel pain.

Hold your chin at that position – short of pain and burning.

Continue to breathe in and out 2 times.



Now the Roll

Roll your chin and jaw along your chest, bringing your right ear toward your right shoulder.



Tip Keep facing forward.

Safety Tip Don't do the roll by twisting the neck. You are not trying to turn your neck to look to the right. Keep your face forward. Allow your chin and then the bottom of your jaw to roll along your chest.

Tip If you can't keep your jaw on your chest the entire time, that's OK. Keep the rolling motion happening with a good stretch in your neck.

You will feel this in

The opposite side of your neck.



Once you've got your right ear stretching toward your right shoulder

Pause

Hold it there while you breathe in and out.

With your first breath, relax your shoulders. Breathing out, feel your shoulders dropping down. This will increase the stretch in the side of your neck. Ease into it by breathing out slowly.

Continue the Roll

By rolling your chin back toward the center of your chest again. (Reversing your movements.)



Continue the Roll

To the left this time.

Repeat, back and forth, as often as you'd like.

3 times to each side is good.

Finish by returning to the center for one last stretch there.

Hold for 2 – 4 breaths.



Option

Add the Neck Press here.

Safety Tip

Do not roll to the back. This is very hard on your neck and on your circulation!

Symptoms and Remedies

When you roll to the side, you feel the stretch in the base of your neck but not the side of your neck.	This means you've twisted your head to the side. Try to keep your nose pointing forward.
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Common Errors



Twisting the head to look to the side, instead of rolling.

Rolling to the back, to keep the roll going in one big circle. Rolling to the back is not safe.



Keeping the shoulders up. Usually people do this to keep from stretching too intensely. Just let your shoulders relax, and, if you need to, raise your chin and head up a bit to ease up on the stretch.