

# Exercises for Thoracic Outlet Syndrome

## For patients who have been diagnosed with Thoracic Outlet Syndrome

Read this brochure to learn more about:

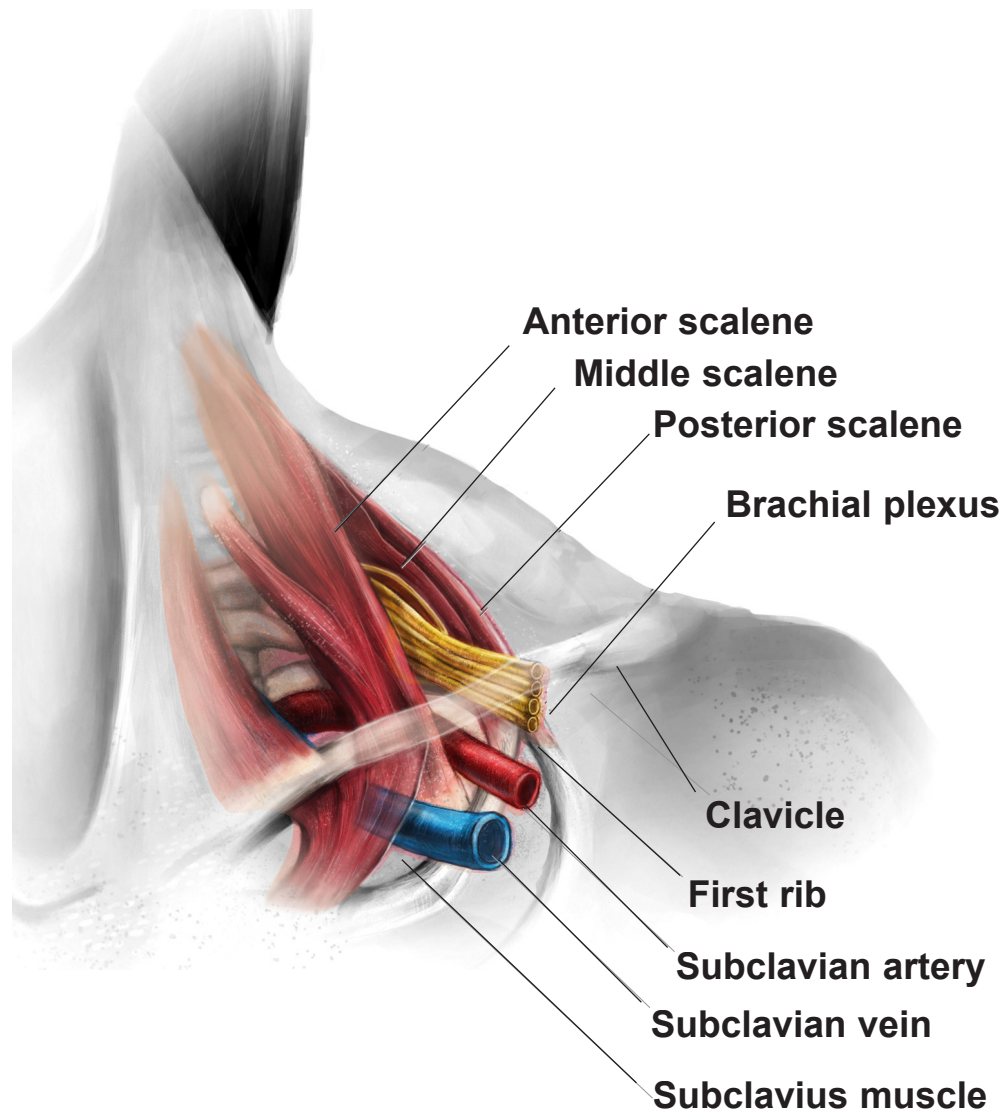
- Thoracic Outlet Syndrome
- treatment options
- exercises you can do
- where to learn more



## What is Thoracic Outlet Syndrome?

Thoracic Outlet Syndrome (called TOS in this pamphlet) is a common but challenging condition that affects the front of the shoulder and neck area, just below the "V" where they meet.

The picture below shows this area.



There are 3 different types of TOS that cause similar problems.

<b>Type of TOS</b>	<b>Causes</b>	<b>What to do</b>
Neurological TOS	Squeezing together of nerves that affects the neck and down the arm.	Exercise. See pages 6 and 7.  Correct your posture. See page 5.
Postural or functional TOS	Bad posture. Slouched posture causes changes in the muscles that affect the nerves and blood vessels.	Exercise. See pages 6 and 7.  Correct your posture. See page 5.
Vascular TOS  *This is the rarest form of TOS, but also the most serious.	Squeezing together of the artery or vein under the collar bone. Can make the arm or hand feel cold, pale and weak. Can be painful and look spotted or blotchy.	Exercise. See pages 6 and 7.  Correct your posture. See page 5.  You may need surgery if vascular TOS is not treated.

## **What is the treatment?**

The exercises on pages 5 and 6 help to treat TOS and focus on:

- decreasing symptoms
- improving posture
- returning to more normal function

## **How do I prepare for my treatment?**

Before you begin your exercises:

### **1. Warm your muscles before stretching.**

Heat the neck and shoulder area with a warm shower or heating pad set to LOW for about 10 to 15 minutes or until you feel warm. You should NEVER feel hot, as this may lead to a burn.

### **2. Stretch gently.**

You should feel a pull in your muscles, but not pain. If stretching becomes painful, try to not go so far into the stretch.

### **3. Hold your stretches.**

Avoid “bouncing” when you stretch.

### **4. Pay attention to how you feel.**

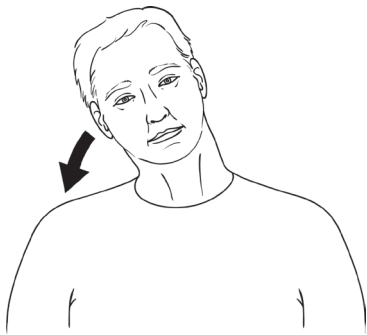
If your hand starts to feel cold, numb or begins to tingle, stop stretching.

## How to correct your posture

Try to sit tall when you are sitting or standing. Slouching causes the shoulders and neck to roll forward, and can tighten the muscles in your neck and shoulders.

Ask your doctor first before you start any new exercise program.

### 1. Neck stretch



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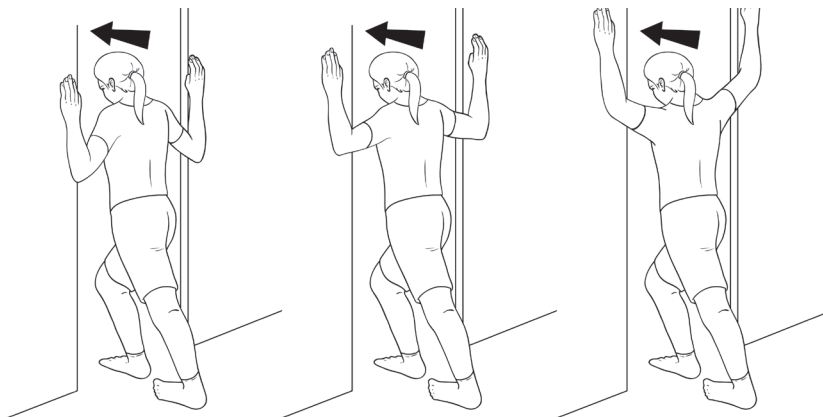
Look straight ahead.

Bend your right ear to your right shoulder, without looking down or looking up.

If your physiotherapist says it is OK, turn your chin down or up. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times, \_\_\_\_\_ times a day.

### 2. Shoulder stretch (3 positions)

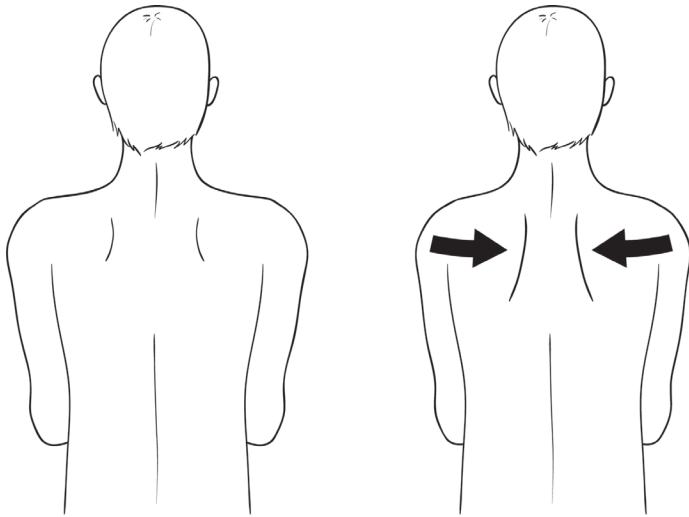


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Start with your elbows or arms low or with your arms straight by your side. Lean your body weight forward until you feel a stretch in the front part of the shoulder or chest.

Hold for 20 to 30 seconds. Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times, \_\_\_\_\_ times a day.

### 3. Shoulder blade squeeze



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Squeeze your shoulder blades together.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times, \_\_\_\_\_ times a day.

As this exercise becomes easier, you can increase the number of squeezes.

For example: Do 1 set of 10, 2 sets of 10, and 3 sets of 10. Your physiotherapist can help.

These exercises are only a start. Find a physiotherapist that you can work with to help you.

## Where to learn more

Find reliable websites with information about TOS here:

### **National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Stroke:**

Website: [www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/thoracic/thoracic.htm](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/thoracic/thoracic.htm)

### **Cleveland Clinic:**

Website: [http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/thoracic\\_outlet\\_syndrome/hic\\_thoracic\\_outlet\\_syndrome.aspx](http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/thoracic_outlet_syndrome/hic_thoracic_outlet_syndrome.aspx)

### **Mayo Clinic:**

Website: [www.mayoclinic.com/health/thoracic-outlet-syndrome/DS00800](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/thoracic-outlet-syndrome/DS00800)

### **TGH Peter and Melaine Munk Patient & Family Learning Centre and Library**

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In person: Norman Urquhart Building – 1st Floor

Website: [www.uhnpatienteducation.ca](http://www.uhnpatienteducation.ca)

## Where to find us

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