

NECK PAIN, INCLUDING HERNIATED DISCS

I. THE 5 KOSHAS

- A. **PHYSICAL body:** Very often neck pain is associated with abnormally rounded upper back, collapsed chest, and head forward of shoulders. If you've ever had whiplash to your neck, you may have strained or torn ligaments. The muscular imbalances associated with forward head and increased rounding of the middle and upper back include: weak, over-stretched, and overworked muscles in the upper back, over-worked neck muscles, and shortened muscles in the upper front chest. This posture can cause physiological disturbances throughout the body. The effect of excessive rounding in the upper back collapses the lungs, pushes the diaphragm down against the abdominal contents, resulting in constipation and weakened abdominals which can result in lower back weakness. The forward head position causes the upper back muscles to work harder resulting in tension headaches and arthritis. Sometimes this posture can even cause degeneration and herniation of intervertebral discs in the neck. All of these postural habits can cause pain, weakness, and numbness in the neck, arms, shoulders, upper back, hand and fingers.
- B. **ENERGY body:** Because of these postural changes the flow of energy is also restricted to the upper lobe of the lungs, heart, chakra and throat chakra. Udana vayu is the primary imbalance with a secondary imbalance in ajna chakra.
- C. **PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL body:** The postural habits discussed in the physical kosha are associated with depression, poor self-image, anxiety, and often times repressed anger.
- D. **WISDOM/DISCOVERY body:** There is a lack of awareness of posture, alignment in all positions, and awareness of body mechanics.
- E. **BLISS body:** Happiness for happiness' sake is no longer an option due to the level of kosha imbalances/separation on other levels.

II. **STRESS RESPONSE:** The natural response from stress in all animals is increased muscular contraction. In the case of neck pain, the postural imbalances create a higher level of stress resulting in pain and dysfunction which escalates in more sympathetic nerve input. The emotional issues are in the tissues.

III. AYURVEDIC PROFILES OF NECK PAIN:

- A. **KAPHA:** Typically are not predisposed to neck pain but when it is experienced it is usually as a result of congestion and compression in the neck and throat. Usually lead a sedentary lifestyle which results in less movement. So a treatment for Kapha would be movement oriented.
- B. **PITTA:** Typically have more inflammatory neck pain like rheumatoid arthritis. They often require more relaxation. Psychological issues can more commonly be associated causative factors. Treatment would entail fasting (for ama reduction), Pancha karma would balance digestion, assimilation, and elimination.
- C. **VATA:** Have a preponderance of neck issues due to dryness which causes micro-fractures. Tend also to be more mobile, causing increased risk of cervical disc prolapse. Treatment would be vata-pacifying, removal of ama, oil massage, slow yoga poses with less neck movement, and more stabilization of neck and shoulders.

IV. WELLNESS PLAN

- A. **PHYSICAL body:**
 - 1. **Pelvic Stabilization:** Pilates Exercises, Abdominal strengtheners
 - 2. **Scapular Stabilization:** reclining mountain, tadak mudra. Somatic exercises—pelvic tilts and 4 part lifts, pelvic clock. Through pilates strengthen upper back muscles and stretching upper chest area. Yoga Mudra, ustrasana, bow with supported neck position.
 - 3. **Restorative Yoga:** Rolling brook pose with rolled towel, restorative fish pose
 - 4. **Back strengthener:** paripurna navasana (upward boat)
- B. **ENERGY body:** Pranayama: 3 part breathing, ujayii (gentle), Prana Vidya breathing to focus on the heart and throat chakras and to stimulate udana vayu. Cranial sacral therapy would be the most successful treatment especially with severe and chronic neck pain. Relaxing mudras would be indicated.
- C. **PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL body:** Yoga nidra techniques to relax and develop/cultivate self-love.
- D. **WISDOM/DISCOVERY body:** Yoga nidra with emphasis on discovering the patterns, conditioning, and habits that don't support a pain free lifestyle.
- E. **BLISS Body:** Tibetan Kum Nye practices or non-dual meditation techniques.

V. LESSON PLAN FOR CLASS

- A. PHYSICAL body: In child pose focus on breathing at the back of the body. Then we would share the experience. Then warmups in vajrasana with shoulder elevation/depression, protraction/retraction, shoulder circles, shoulder rotation and neck movement in opposite directions, and trapezius release, neck lateral flexion. Neck assisted stretches. Neck rolls unless there is herniated discs. Supine lying on back. Then apanasana and straight leg abdominal strengtheners. Yogic situps with the neck supported. Four part pelvic tilt and bridge next. From modified makarasana support head with back of hand and do upper back lifts with shoulder blades stabilized. Then sphinx pose with breathing. Child pose again with arms extended. With cat stretches and sunbirds. And down dog pose and then savasana.
- B. ENERGY body: 3 part breathing/ ujjayi pranayama. Mudras—Ganesha mudra; Hasta prana mudra #5 (Vishuddhi Udan vayu)
- C. PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL body: Mantra OM HAM NAMAḤ
- D. WISDOM body: Yoga Nidra technique emphasis on self-discovery
- E. BLISS body: non dual meditation on finding areas of both comfort and discomfort and uniting them. Affirmation: I feel my heart opening as the weight of my life lifts off of my shoulders.