

Referral Support Service

Pain and Rheumatology

PM02

Chronic Neck Pain

Definition

Neck Pain continuing for more than 6 weeks

Exclude Red Flag Symptoms

- Significant preceding trauma or neck surgery (Needs assessment in A&E)
- Systemic upset (weight loss, night sweats, fevers)
- Severe pain
- Nocturnal pain
- Relatively young (<20) or old (>55)
- Signs of spinal cord compression
- Significant vertebral body tenderness
- History of TB, HIV, cancer or inflammatory arthritis

Management

Consider imaging: X- ray Cervical spine / MRI to exclude cord compression

Consider bloods (FBC, inflammatory markers)

Promote self -management through understanding and activity.

Look for aggravating factors (e.g. posture at work, stress, depression)

Pain Management

Simple Mechanical Neck Pain: Promote self -management through understanding, exercises and activity. (Consider exercise programmes, physiotherapy)

Complex Neck Pain: Consider X-ray, MRI scan, bloods (inflammatory markers, myeloma screen) to make accurate diagnosis.

Neuropathic Pain Management: Useful guidance for patients to ensure correct titration and use of these medications.

1. [Amitriptyline titration PILS](#)
2. [Gabapentin titration PILS](#)
3. [Nortriptyline titration PILS](#)

Referral Information

Information to include in referral letter

- Exact reason for referral and diagnosis.
- Physiotherapy outcome.
- Treatments tried (including dose and length of treatment of drugs).
- Results of any investigations.
- [Past Medical/Surgical History](#)
- [Current Medications](#)
- [BMI/ Smoking status](#)

Patient information leaflets/ PDAs

Consider ordering [ARC Neck pain](#) leaflets (free excellent resource)

[Simple neck pain exercises](#)

Reference

Nice CKS 2013
Arthritis research Council Guidelines
Sheffield Persistent Pain Clinic Guidelines