

## EXERCISE

Q: What's the best exercise and the worst exercise if I have migraines?

A: RECUMBENT BIKES are a good choice, because you can sit slumped and there's not any bouncing action at all. UPRIGHT BIKES are also OK, but you'd need to stay completely upright, for now. Leaning forward to put your hands or elbows on handlebars (like in spin class) can really irritate your neck from bending at the waist while looking up, or simply having your 8-pound head hanging in space if looking straight. Your neck muscles contract majorly to hold your head in that position. Rather, simply stay completely upright, with your hands on your hips or hanging at your sides.



Third best would be ELLIPTICAL MACHINES, as there is some head movement, compared to bikes, which may irritate your head neck. It's worth a try to do your own test, first by doing around 10 minutes without using the arm component of the elliptical. If you do OK with that after 24-48 hours, you can try using the arms on the elliptical as well. The arms are actually quite beneficial for your neck joints, it doesn't set off inflammation. The reason is that it moves the joints in your neck in such a way that it flushes them out, enhancing circulation. But if it flares the joints up by too much movement too fast (using the arms on the elliptical), you'll simply delay your healing. Notice the rotation that takes place in your neck when using the arms, in the illustration, above, right).



Your symptoms will let you know when it's time for certain exercises or machines. On any aerobic equipment, or while doing anything in the gym, avoid looking up for any sustained period. I realize that many TV screens are located up high. Looking up to see them will likely jam the joints in your neck. In the early stages of disc bulge reversal, you'll even find that you need to drop your head down slightly to get off of the disc bulge as you do everything in the gym- including aerobic equipment. You'll know you're off of the disc bulge when you notice tightness in your upper shoulders or shoulder blades decrease. That should be a "safe zone" position for your head/neck.

Planks and abdominal work stress your neck majorly. Planks contract the muscles in your neck very strongly to hold your 8-pound head in space (see photo to right). Crunches contract muscles in the front of your neck and tend to involve flexion (bending- see photo below, left), both of which will undo what we're doing with your neck by causing flexion, versus extension.





Think of anything like walking or jogging as creating a jackhammer-like effect of your 8-pound head on your neck from your heels hitting the ground, repeatedly. It's best to avoid them in the early stage of your neck rehab. So, treadmills are generally a bad idea while neck joints are still volatile. If your head/neck get worse any time before around 8:00 in the evening, it's very likely that your neck joints are still way too inflamed to tolerate walking for any distance.

Swimming involves holding your heavy head out straight (your head doesn't float), plus repeated rotation (to breathe), which also flares up your neck.



If you use weights or machines, avoid shoulder work, like overhead press and handling free weights, because both jam your neck through muscle contraction. Experiment with different machines to see which ones your neck tolerate, as most resistive machines are OK. If you pay attention, you can tell when your upper shoulders or neck are contracting, which can help you figure out which machines won't work for you.

The muscle contraction and maneuvers involved in handling free weights generally flare up neck structures. Once your neck begins healing with our system, you can progressively phase into more and more exercise options.

