Acute Care for Neck Injuries

1. **Rest and Positioning:** During the acute period, it is important to rest your neck frequently. The better care you take now, the quicker the recovery. Try to keep your head balanced over your shoulders and avoid looking down for prolonged periods of time. Occasionally a soft collar is needed for extra support.

2. **Sleeping Positions:** When lying down or sleeping, keep your head level with your body and the curve of your neck supported. Try placing a small towel roll in the base of your pillowcase to support the natural curve in your neck. If side sleeping, hug a pillow to support your upper arm. When sleeping on your back, place two pillows under your knees to further support your entire spine.

3. **Ice:** Use a cold pack (crushed ice or frozen peas placed in a pillow case works well) for 15-20 minutes, several times (3-5) per day to help decrease pain, muscle spasm and inflammation. When applying ice, rest in a comfortable position, with your head and neck supported.

4. **Sitting:** Whenever you sit, make sure to use a towel roll or cushion behind your low back to provide support and to help maintain the natural curves of the spine. This will help keep your head aligned and balanced over your spine. Stay out of low, soft furniture.

5. **Avoid:** Looking up or down for prolonged periods of time, quick movements and rolling your head around. When reading, keep your book or papers propped up at eye level if possible. Try to identify the movements and positions that may have contributed to your symptoms and avoid these.
Exercises for Acute Neck Injuries

1. **Abdominal Breathing**: While lying on your back or side with your neck supported, breathe into your belly. Your belly should rise as you inhale and lower as you inhale. Repeat for two minutes, several times daily.

2. **Rotation**: Sitting or standing with good posture, turn your head to each side, maintaining pain free range of motion. Avoid jutting your chin forward. May do lying down as needed for pain. Repeat 5-10 times each way, several times daily.

3. **Cervical Clock**: While on your back with your neck supported, imagine the face of a watch above your nose. Using as little effort as possible, move your toward each of the numbers in a diagonal pattern (12-6, 1-7, 2-8, etc). Make sure to stay in a pain free range of motion. Repeat several times daily.

4. **Dorsal Glide**: While lying on your back, gently nod your chin down, as you elongate the back of your neck. Hold for 4-6 breaths then relax. Repeat 3-5 times. Try to keep the muscles in the front of your neck as relaxed as possible. Do this several times daily.

5. **Shoulder Blade Retraction**: While lying on your back gently pull shoulder blades in toward spine half an inch, hold 3 seconds and relax. Repeat 5-10 times, several times per day.