

How to Perform Traction for Neck Pain or Pinched Nerve without Equipment (60 Sec.) Decompress the Spine

Neck (cervical) traction is sometimes appropriate for a pinched nerve or arthritis. The traction might take pressure off the nerve if caused by a disc or bony type encroachment. Neck traction may also give you some temporary relief from the discomfort of arthritis by decreasing the pressure on your neck joints.

Before trying traction, speak with your physical therapist or doctor to ensure that neck traction is a safe treatment for you. Also, before you try traction, I would suggest you watch and try the exercises in the video *#1 Stretch and Exercise Program for Neck Pain, Pinched Nerve, etc.* You might get relief from your pain with these exercises and not need to perform traction.

Finally, before you perform any traction on your neck you will want to know if traction would be of any benefit.

The opposite of traction is compression. First, we will determine if compression increases your neck pain or symptoms.

Take both hands and place them on your head. Lock the fingers and push gently down on your head while maintaining good upright neck posture. Did compression make it worse?



Traction. The best way to test to see if traction would be beneficial is to do the following: You should be seated. Find the prominent bumps behind each ear. These are known as the mastoid processes (shown in red).



Using the area of your palm between the two meaty parts hooks onto the bump with your fingers facing up. This should be done on both sides. Cup your fingers over your ears. Apply even pressure between your two palms attempt to gently pull up on the head. Did decompression or traction improve your neck pain or symptoms? If yes you can proceed to applying traction. We will demonstrate four ways:

1. You will start in the same manner as the test. Find the prominent bumps behind each ear. These are known as the mastoid processes (shown in red).



Using the area of your palm between the two meaty parts hooks onto the bump with your fingers facing up. Cup your fingers over your ears. This should be done on both sides. Apply even pressure between your two palms attempt to gently pull up on the head.



To apply more pressure, find a hard surface that is approximately 6 inches higher than your elbows when you are kneeling (dresser, countertop, table?) Place your elbows and upper arm on the surface and put your hands back in place on the base of your skull. Flex your neck forward just a slight amount (20 degrees or so). Lean back as the palms apply traction to the skull. It should be PAIN-FREE! Pull your hands to the ceiling and lean back letting your butt sag to the floor. Your body weight will increase the traction to your neck. Go to a level you find comfortable. Hold for 15 seconds.



See how your neck tolerates the traction and if acceptable, repeat the next day. The second day you can repeat the 15 second traction 3X if comfortable. Eventually you can do 3x (2-3x per day).

2. This time you will use a rolled towel to apply the traction. The towel will be placed under the mastoid processes, and you can pull up evenly on the

ends of the towel with your palms facing forward. Pull up towards the ceiling.



To apply more pressure, find a hard surface that is approximately 6 inches higher than your elbows when you are kneeling (dresser, countertop, table?) Place your elbows and upper arm on the surface and put your hands back in place on the base of your skull. Flex your neck forward just a slight amount (20 degrees or so). Lean back as you use the towel to apply traction to the skull. It should be PAIN-FREE! Pull your hands to the ceiling and lean back letting your butt sag to the floor. Your body weight will increase the traction to your neck. Go to a level you find comfortable. Hold for 15 seconds.



See how your neck tolerates the traction and if acceptable, repeat the next day. The second day you can repeat the 15 second traction 3X if comfortable. Eventually you can do 3x (2-3x per day).

3. This is a variation of the towel traction. If you have pain, numbness, or tingling down your left arm you might try holding the towel with just the right arm. The reverse is also true. If you have pain, numbness, or tingling down your right arm you might try holding the towel with just the left arm.



4. This is another variation of the towel traction. If you have pain on the right side of your neck and want to gap the joints on that side even more-do the following. Apply the traction with the towel. Then slightly bend your head to the left. This will open the right side. If you have pain on the left side of your neck and want to gap the joints on that side even more-do the following. Apply the traction with the towel. Then slightly bend your head to the right. This will open the left side.

