

# Sweetwater Pain & Spine

Home Exercise Handout

## Cervicogenic Headache

**Cervicogenic headache** originates from dysfunction in the upper cervical spine (C1–C3). Stiffness and muscle tightness in this region refer pain to the back of the head, behind the eyes, and across the scalp. Pain is typically one-sided and worsened by neck movement or sustained postures such as prolonged screen work. The four exercises below target the root cause: suboccipital muscle tension, weak deep cervical flexors, and restricted thoracic mobility. Perform consistently — results build over 4–6 weeks.

### 1 Chin Tuck / Craniocervical Flexion

3 x 10 reps · Hold 5–10 sec · Every hour at your desk



**1**

**SET UP**

- ✓ Sit or stand tall with shoulders relaxed.
- ✓ Imagine a string gently lifting the top of your head.

**GOOD POSTURE CHECK**

- ✓ Ears over shoulders
- ✓ Shoulders relaxed
- ✓ Ribs stacked over pelvis





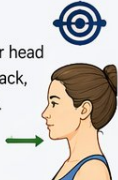
**2**

**TUCK**

Without tilting your head up or down, glide your chin straight backward — as if making a “double chin.”

**FOCUS**

Move your head straight back, not down.





**3**


**FEEL**

You should feel a gentle lengthening at the base of the skull and the front of the neck.

- ✓ Do not let the chin poke upward.

**DON'T**

- ✗ Don't tilt your head up or down.
- ✗ Don't jut your chin forward.





**4**

**HOLD & RETURN**

Hold the tucked position for 5–10 seconds. Then slowly return to neutral. Relax and repeat.


**BREATHE**

Breathe normally. Inhale and exhale slowly during the hold.



### 2 Suboccipital Self-Release (Tennis Ball)

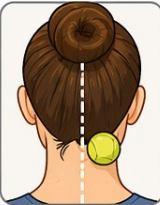
1–2 min hold per spot · 10 slow nods · 1–2x daily




**1**

**SET UP**

Lie on your back on a firm surface. Place a tennis ball just to one side of the midline at the base of the skull.




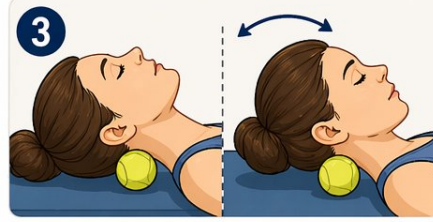


**2**

**HOLD & RELAX**

Allow the full weight of your head to sink into the ball. Breathe slowly and let the muscles relax for 1–2 minutes.






**3**

**NOD**

Perform 10 slow, gentle nods (“yes” motion) while maintaining ball contact.

**10** slow nods



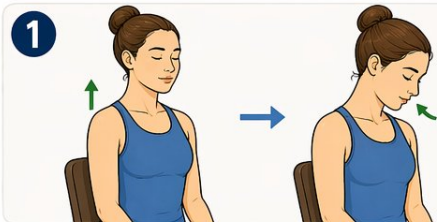
**4**

**REPOSITION**

Reposition slightly to target adjacent tender points. Repeat steps 2–3 for each spot as needed.

### 3 Chin-to-Armpit Stretch (Upper Cervical Rotation)

3 reps per side · Hold 20–30 sec · 2x daily



#### SET UP & CHIN TUCK

Sit tall with good posture. Perform a gentle chin tuck by sliding your chin straight back, creating a double chin. This loads the upper cervical segment.



#### ROTATE

With the chin tucked, slowly rotate your head so your nose points down toward your armpit on the symptomatic side.



#### APPLY OVERPRESSURE

Use your same-side hand to apply very light overpressure at the back of the head. The pressure should be gentle—just enough to enhance the stretch.

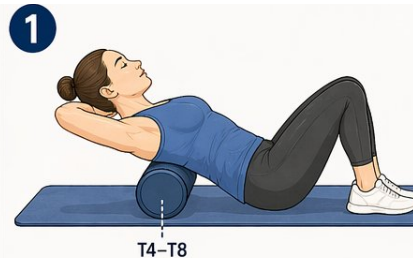


#### HOLD & BREATHE

Hold for 20–30 seconds. Breathe slowly and relax into the stretch.

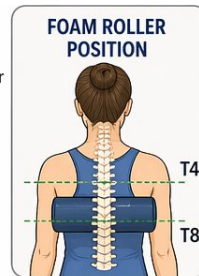
### 4 Thoracic Extension over Foam Roller

4–5 positions · Hold 30–60 sec each · Daily



#### SET UP

Place a foam roller perpendicular to your spine at the mid-back (T4–T8). Recline back with hands interlaced behind the neck to support it.



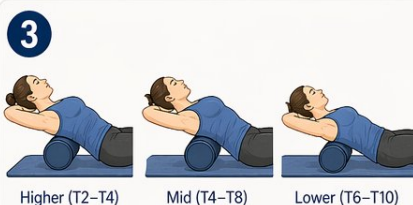
#### EXTEND & BREATHE

Let gravity extend the thoracic spine over the roller. Breathe slowly and relax into the stretch.

30–60 sec per position



Inhale into your rib cage. Exhale and allow your back to melt over the roller.



#### SHIFT & REPEAT

Shift the roller slightly up or down to target multiple thoracic levels. Hold 30–60 seconds each position.



Do not roll the lumbar spine (low back) or neck.



■ Stop any exercise that causes sharp pain, new numbness or weakness, or worsening of symptoms, and contact our office. These exercises supplement but do not replace your provider's individualized plan.

Questions or concerns? Call Sweetwater Pain & Spine: (775) 870-1480

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