

Precise Treatments for the Muscles and Ligaments of the Neck ~ 2022

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The neck is a strong, vulnerable and complex structure. It is the most movable part of the spine, and yet is strong enough to balance and support the head, even with chronically poor posture. The neck is also one of the most common areas of client complaint, injury and dysfunction, and can be a challenging area to treat effectively. Precise, targeted, skillful deep tissue work in this area is not about broad strokes or brute force; it's about precision and strategy, informed by knowledge of the anatomical structures. Given the complexity of the neck, it's rare to find massage therapists who really know how to massage the neck in a focused, specific, and anatomically-informed way—especially around the small muscular and ligamentous attachments—even though this is where the muscles and ligaments are most commonly frayed and/or inflamed.

The neck is much more than just a tube, although 8 of the body's 10 systems move through it, and it is absolutely vital for the survival for all vertebrates. It's also an elegant, complex tensegrity mechanism with many highly-synchronized components, like a beautifully-designed clock or a high-performance automobile. If a clock was clogged with debris or needed lubrication, you wouldn't wash it with a sponge and some dish soap. Nor would you maintain a high-performance engine by rubbing oil on the hood or the top of the engine—you'd need to get down into the moving parts.

The small paraspinal muscles of the neck (which are strong and are often quite tight) are designed to fire in an elegantly synchronized way to allow for effortless segmental motion. But if they lock up, some of the bigger cervical muscles (such as the trapezius and the SCM) have to take over and push through the intrinsic restrictions.

These smaller muscles respond extremely well to the precision of Muscle-Specific Deep Tissue work; there are many of them living alongside or over at each other that rarely (if ever) get stretched and separated from each other. In addition, there are at least a dozen bones and over 25 joints that benefit from having motion introduced into them once the fascial and muscular structures of the neck are unglued. We all need to have these structures maintained and 'cleaned up' from time to time, just as we periodically go to the dentist to get our teeth cleaned. This cleanup restores intrinsic ROM and allows the cervical structures to glide more freely.

In addition, the ligaments of the neck are exquisitely sensitive, and when they are compressed, stretched, torqued, or injured, they will send a distress signal to the CNS that causes the small paraspinal muscles to lock down and "splint" the area. This is often a missing link in cervical pain, and in some cases massaging the muscles, although beneficial, is only treating the symptom, and not the underlying cause. Precise treatment of the irritated ligaments can remove deep chronic pain, and encourage the neighboring paraspinal muscles to relax and let go by doing an 'inside job'.

These muscle-specific and treatment-based techniques will improve the precision and effectiveness of your neck massage, and can be easily integrated to your style of bodywork, whether it's a clinic, spa or private practice. Students who have taken this class have reported that it helped to increase their precision, palpatory sensitivity, and effectiveness with their neck massages. Clients love the results, feeling a newfound sense of freedom and ease in their necks.

"This class has vastly improved my knowledge, approach, and technique. I am looking forward to immediately applying all this in my practice." - Jessica Roberts

"I think more than any other technique or series of movements I've incorporated, this neck work has had the most consistent and specific effects. Every person who has received the work has said they've felt lengthened, their neck felt freed and that they slept very soundly that night, often feeling very relaxed the next couple of days. Thank you!" - Dawn Geula