

Neck Strengthening Exercises

Athletes of all ages can use the following neck strengthening exercises to make their necks stronger to help them from getting hurt when heading the ball. They are especially useful for athletes under 14 years old that may not have qualified people to monitor neck-strengthening exercises performed on equipment.

Exercise 1: Exercise to strengthen the muscles that move the head forward: Place a towel or similar article around the head at the level of the forehead, as shown. Hold the head erect. While moving the head forward, resist the motion by pulling back on the towel.



Exercise 2: (Exercise is the opposite of Exercise 1.) Exercise to strengthen the muscles that move the head backwards. Begin by placing a towel or similar article around the back of the head to cover the lower portion of the skull. Use hands to hold the towel in place while attempting to move the head backward, resisting this motion by pulling forward on the towel.



Exercise 3: This photo shows that the hands can be substitutes for a towel when strengthening the neck muscles. In this picture, the athlete is pushing against the head with resistance provided by the right arm. The muscles being strengthened are used to move the head sideways.



Exercise 4: This photo shows the use of a towel to strengthen the muscles used to move the head sideways in the direction opposite of that in Exercise 3.



Note: These exercises can also be done laying on a table with the athletes head hanging off the table moving their heads against gravity in the same motions as above. Always insist that young athletes provide their own resistance in neck strengthening exercises. Do not permit partners to provide the resistance. Only the individuals who receive the resistance know the difference between tolerable and excessive forces.