

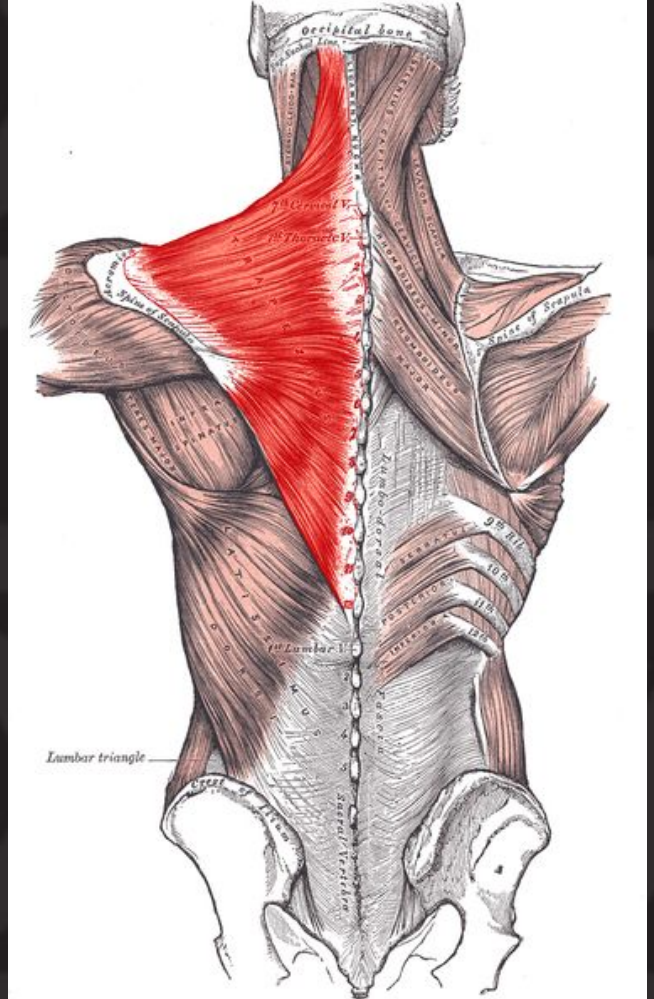
Upper Trap Tightness/Shoulder Pain: Helpful Self-Active Releases, Stretches, & Functional Warm-Up Exercises

Michele Schultz, PT, DPT
React Physical Therapy

Anatomy of the Trapezius

Large fan-shaped muscle that extends from the cervical to the thoracic region of posterior neck and trunk

- ❖ Consists of 3 parts:
 - Upper fibers
 - Middle fibers
 - Lower fibers



What can lead to upper trap tightness/shoulder pain?

- ❖ Combination of:
 - Highly repetitive work
 - Forceful exertions
 - High level of static contractions
 - Prolonged static loads
 - Constrained work postures

Epidemiology



- ❖ 20% of adult population
- ❖ Higher prevalence among women
 - Risk Factors
 - More static load on neck/upper back muscles
 - Work tasks involving high repetitiveness, low control, & high mental demands

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/pain/say-good-night-to-neck-pain>

Characteristics/ Presentation

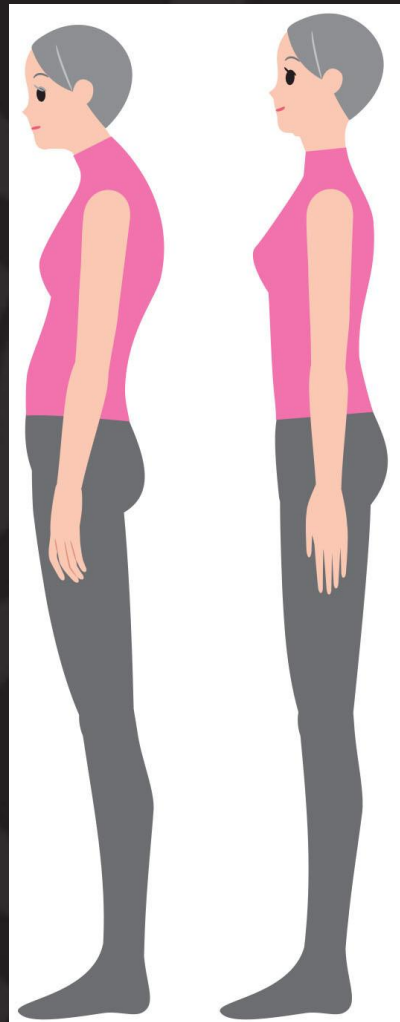
- ❖ Sudden onset of pain
- ❖ Muscle stiffness/spasms
- ❖ Tightness of neck/shoulder complex
- ❖ Heaviness of head/headache
- ❖ Tenderness of the upper trapezius area

Quick Postural Assessment

- ❖ Place yourself in front of a mirror
- ❖ Stand in a comfortable position with arms at your sides (preferably sleeveless shirt)
- ❖ Take a look in the mirror or take a ~mirror selfie~ & review photo

What do I look for?

1. Is your head in front of your shoulders?
2. Are your shoulders rounded forward?





Are your
shoulder
blades moving
symmetrically?

Management

Postural Training Exercise

STARTING POSITION

1. ***Set an alarm on your phone every hour!***
2. Sit up nice and tall with your back straight and shoulders back.
3. Sit at the end of the chair on top of the “sit bones” (ischial tuberosities), distributing your weight evenly between both sides.
4. Knees should be bent at a 90 degree angle with keeping your knees even with your hips.
5. Keep your feet flat on the floor.

MAKE IT AN ACTIVE EXERCISE!

- ★ Squeeze shoulder blades down and back
- ★ Create a slight double chin to bring into proper head-neck alignment, eyes facing forward
- ★ Activate hamstrings isometrically
 - **THIS WILL HELP TO ENGAGE THE CORE!**
- ★ Hold this contraction/position for 2 minutes!

Demonstrations

Outline:

- ❖ Self-active releases
- ❖ Stretches
- ❖ Functional warm-up

Summary

Goal: Utilize self-releases, stretches, and functional warm-up exercises to

- ❖ Release tight upper traps
- ❖ Strengthen weak middle and lower traps

Compliance is important in order to see increased athletic performance and help prevent injury!

Questions?

Thank you!

Michele Schultz, PT, DPT

React Physical Therapy (Lakeshore East Clinic)

333 East Benton Place, Chicago IL

mschultz@bereact.com

312.929.3646

