

Benefits for Shoulder and Neck Stretching for Postnatal Women

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Abstract: **Background:** Women who have delivered, especially after Lower Segment Cesarean Section (LSCS), are more prone to urinary incontinence (UI). Neck and shoulder pain after LSCS is due to long nursing, holding the baby, hormonal changes and bad posture. These musculoskeletal problems may hinder daily tasks and a high standard of living. Postpartum physical therapy is essential to facilitate healing and improve your functional ability. **Case description:** A 27-year-old woman, who is a first-time mother and six weeks Lower Segment Cesarean Section Postpartum She told the physiotherapy department that she had a stiff neck and both shoulders which were worse when she carried her baby breastfed for a long time or did housework and at the end of the day weariness. The woman has difficulty getting up when feeding her baby and sometimes has difficulty sleeping due to her discomfort. She denies any heat, swelling or tingling, numbness or radiation of discomfort. There is some discomfort but the cesarean scar is well healed and she is able to do her daily chores by herself. Her main goals are to improve her posture make it easier to take care of her baby and reduce the pain in her neck and shoulder. **Result:** The patient had improved posture, increased shoulder flexibility, less tightness in the muscles, increased cervical spine and shoulder range of motion and better capacity to carry out everyday chores post intervention. "I feel like I have a better quality of life and more confidence", she said. She said she was able to carry and nurse her child more comfortably. **Conclusion:** This case study showed the benefits of physiotherapy intervention in decreasing shoulder and neck pain in postpartum moms post-LSCS by widening the shoulder and neck. The rehabilitation program consisted of shoulder rotation, side shoulder stretch, overhead shoulder stretch, triceps stretch, neck rotation, shoulder shrug, neck forward and backward bending and neck side bending for six weeks under the supervision of a physiotherapist. The patient reported an improvement in their neck after the treatment. She was sure that she could have her baby and raise it. No negative side effects were observed during the course of the medicine. The findings indicate that stretching exercises of the neck and shoulder may significantly enhance recovery in postpartum physical therapy. Other impractical results are: Longer follow-up times and more patients.

Keywords: Postnatal Care, Physiotherapy, Cesarean Section (LSCS), Shoulder Stretching, Neck Stretching, Postpartum Rehabilitation, Neck Pain, Shoulder Pain, Postural Correction, Breastfeeding Posture, Range of Motion, Musculoskeletal Rehabilitation, Maternal Health, Quality of Life.

1. Background

During this time the new mother's body will start to heal and return to normal. But postpartum normalcy won't be the same as pre-pregnancy normalcy. A woman's body that has carried and delivered a baby will have a new normal.

Definition

While nine months of pregnancy receive most of the attention, postnatal care is equally important. This time is called the postnatal period. It begins immediately after the baby is born, and continues for six weeks. This is a time of many physical, hormonal, and emotional changes for a mother as she adjusts to caring for her new baby. The whole experience is improved by allowing the mother time to recover and to get to know her child.

Epidemiology:

Most of the pregnancy care is focused on the first nine months, but postnatal care is equally important. This period starts right after the birth of the baby and continues for six weeks. As the mother adjusts to caring for her newborn, she goes through many physical, hormonal, and emotional changes. Giving the mother time to heal and get to know her child is meant to improve the whole experience."

Technique of procedure:

In order to monitor healing and avoid complications, postnatal care is a methodical medical and supportive treatment given to the mother and newborn following delivery and during the first six weeks of life.

Scope:

Your body can be helped by a physiotherapist to return to its pre-pregnancy state. Your return to exercise, which varies for each person based on prior activity level, can be guided by postpartum physical therapy. Seeing a physiotherapist for a postnatal care evaluation six to eight weeks after delivery is a good idea. At this point, we can evaluate and assist you in comprehending the condition of your pelvic floor before creating a strategy to resume exercising.

Aim of the Study

This case study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of shoulder and neck stretching exercises as a physiotherapy intervention to improve posture, increase cervical and shoulder range of motion, decrease neck and shoulder pain and improve functional ability and quality of life in a postpartum woman with a Lower Segment Cesarean Section (LSCS).

- Assess shoulder and neck pain in a postpartum woman after LSCS.
- Should be stretching to improve shoulder and neck range of motion.
- Assess relieve tight muscles in the neck, shoulders and upper back.
- Assess enhance one's posture while carrying and nursing a child.
- Help to improve the flexibility and mobility of the neck and shoulder muscles.
- To help the patient perform activities of daily living more easily.
- To increase overall comfort, confidence and quality of life for mothers thru physical therapy intervention.

Case Description Assessment

A 27-year-old lady who is six weeks (1½ months) postpartum and a first time mother Lower Segment Caesarean Section She reported to the physiotherapy department that she had pain and stiffness in her neck and both shoulders, which were aggravated by carrying her baby, prolonged breastfeeding or doing household chores and tiredness after the day is done. The patient reports occasional sleep disturbances due to discomfort and has difficulty maintaining an upright position while feeding her infant. She denies any heat, swelling, tingling, numbness or radiating discomfort. The cesarean scar has healed well and she can manage everyday tasks on her own, though not without some discomfort. Her primary goals include better posture, relief from discomfort associated with caring for her infant, and reduction of neck and shoulder pain.

Uniqueness of the Study

This case study is different because it discusses the benefits of neck and shoulder stretches to a woman six weeks post cesarean section (LSCS). Postnatal therapy often focuses on recovery of pelvic floor and abdominal muscles, but neck and shoulder pain from prolonged nursing, carrying a baby and poor posture are often ignored. The study emphasizes the need for early physiotherapy intervention to decrease discomfort, improve flexibility, enhance the posture, and improve functional capacity during routine activities of childcare. It also demonstrates how simple, safe and inexpensive stretching exercises can increase the mother's comfort, speed her recovery and improve her overall quality of life in the postpartum period.

Physiotherapy Intervention

Physiotherapy intervention began after six weeks of Lower Segment Caesarean Section (LSCS) when it was confirmed that patient has a well healed incision and no post-operative complications. The physiotherapist demonstrated each exercise and posture and supervised the movements while the patient sat comfortably on a chair with feet flat on the floor and back supported. During the exercises the patient was instructed to keep a straight posture, to keep her shoulders relaxed, and to breathe normally (i.e. not to hold the breath).

1) Side shoulder stretch

Therapist Position: Standing beside the patient to guide the movement and ensure proper alignment.

Patient Position: Sitting or standing upright.

Procedure: The patient brings one arm across the chest and gently pulls it closer using the opposite hand until a comfortable stretch is felt in the shoulder. Repeat on the opposite side.

Timing: Hold for 20–30 seconds.

Repetitions: 3 repetitions on each side.

Goals: Stretch the posterior shoulder muscles, reduce tightness, improve flexibility, and relieve discomfort.

2) Overhead shoulder stretch

The therapist's job is to support the patient, help with mobility, and maintain alignment.

The patient may be sitting or standing erect.

Method: The patient places one arm across his chest and with the other hand slowly pulls it towards him until the shoulder is comfortably stretched. Proceed on the other side.

Hold for about 20 to 30 seconds. Repeat on each side 3 times.

The aim is to increase flexibility, decrease pain and stretch and release the posterior shoulder muscles.

3) Triceps stretch

Therapist stance: stand next to patient and help as needed.

Sitting or standing.

The patient raises one arm above his head, bends the elbow so that the hand reaches behind the neck, then uses the other hand to gently push the elbow back. Switch to the other side.

Hold for 20 – 30 seconds

Each side is done three times

4) Neck Rotation

The patient is oriented or near the therapist. The patient can stand erect or sit back with assistance.

Method: The patient is slowly rotated to the right, then back to the center, and finally to the left, until pain or discomfort is felt.

Timing: 5 second hold.

There are ten on each side.

The objectives are to lessen discomfort, enhance range of motion of the cervical spine and to decrease neck stiffness.

Goals: Increase upper body flexibility, relax tense muscles, stretch triceps and shoulder muscles.

5) Neck Forward and Backward Bend

Therapist position: standing next to the patient.

Patient Position: Standing or sitting erect.

Procedure: The patient flexes the head forward until a slight strain is felt and then extends the head backwards to a comfortable range.

Timing: 5 seconds in each position

You have to do 10 repetitions in each direction.

The goals are to enhance neck mobility, reduce stiffness and increase cervical flexibility.

Result of Exercises

After 6 weeks of physiotherapy (shoulder and neck stretching exercises) the patient's functional skills and symptoms improved significantly. Decreased neck and shoulder pain improved cervical spine flexion, extension,

side bending and rotation. A significant decrease in the rigidity of the pectoralis, levator scapulae and upper trapezius muscles was observed. Improved shoulder joint mobility and flexibility Improved postural awareness was clearly shown to address rounded shoulders and forward head posture. Scapular stabilizer muscle strength improved according to Manual Muscle Testing (MMT). Chronic nursing was more patient-friendly. The baby became easier to manage and less uncomfortable to carry. less tired when doing regular housework. The patient reported feeling less anxious, more confident and able in her everyday functioning.

2. Discussion

The findings of the case study are consistent with prior studies of musculoskeletal pain postpartum. Asif et al. (2022) state that breastfeeding, hormonal changes in the baby and poor posture can lead to neck and shoulder pain. Similarly, the patient's neck and shoulder pain was improved after 6 weeks of stretching exercises. 10.18203/2394-6040.ijcmph20222573 Dandekar & Khatavkar (2022) One of the main reasons new mothers suffer from neck pain is due to improper positioning while breastfeeding. To summarize, the present case study provides evidence that neck and shoulder stretching exercises are safe and effective physiotherapy therapies for postnatal women to improve their quality of life, reduce pain and improve their posture. Correction of poor posture and upper back pain during nursing were Nursing Medicine (2022) (DOI:10.1089/bfm.2022.0105).

3. Conclusion

This case study shows how the physiotherapy intervention of extending the shoulder and neck can help postpartum women with LSCS. Under the supervision of a physiotherapist, the patient was given a 6-week rehabilitation program which includes shoulder rotation, side shoulder stretch, overhead shoulder stretch, triceps stretch, neck rotation, shoulder shrug, neck forward and backward bending and neck side bending. The patient felt improved in his neck after therapy. She thought she was able to carry and nurture her child. The drug had no adverse effects when taken. Findings suggest that stretching exercises of the neck and shoulder may greatly improve recovery from physical therapy after childbirth. Additional impractical outcomes are longer follow-up and more patients.

References

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