

# Nexus<sup>®</sup> for Adolescents

We conceived of the Nexus neck cushion for the over 40s. This is because from the 30s onwards all of us get less and less elastic and flexible. Many patients with chronically stiff necks have benefited from the regular use of the cushion. In the beginning of our Nexus adventure, I would never have dreamed of advising young patients to use it, as the elasticity of their soft tissues is such that they can readily recover from stressful postures. But, with experience, we see that there are situations where special care is necessary even for the young.



The first time Nexus was used to treat a younger person was for a 20-year-old, fit and muscular student, who regularly 'treated' his tense neck by abruptly tilting or clicking his head using his two hands. He was doing it several times a day. It is obvious that we are no big fan of this course of this approach... so we recommended use of the Nexus for a few minutes at a time to loosen up the tightened neck muscles. This seemed to help, much to my (and his mother's) relief. A subsequent x-ray of his neck revealed the cause of the chronic tightening: a malformation of his upper cervical spine made it difficult for him to keep his neck in a fixed position for any period of time.

This first experience opened up our thinking on the use of Nexus for people younger than 30 or 40. The next teenager we treated with a Nexus was a 14 year old girl with persistent neck pain. Any clinical help we were able to provide was only short term; after some thought and reflection we realized that the ongoing orthodontic

treatment (brackets etc.) was a continual source of irritation of the neck. By introducing the Nexus into her daily routine we were able to reduce the need to come to the Clinic, to have physiotherapy or manual therapy. It gave her a means of self-help. As in older patients, Nexus is not a replacement for specific treatment, but it can lower the frequency of treatment and make the patients more independent. This is particularly so after inevitable stresses to the neck due to long-held postures typical in work or in study.

The next case was a young man who suffered from a strained neck while preparing for his exams. Here, again, our toolbox of manual therapy, local injections, trigger point acupuncture etc. did not have lasting effects: the problem came back with more study. Nexus helped him to sail through this difficult period with little need for additional help.

Many patients are in the same situation. A few minutes of neck-stretching with Nexus alleviates the tightening of the neck muscles, e.g. after a stressful meeting, after studying, after work. It's a simple remedy without risk. That being said it would be naive to consider all neck strain treatable by Nexus, but it's often worth a try; and quite a few times it does give relief.

In younger patients Nexus can help if the root cause of the problem is beyond our reach, be it a non-optimal lifestyle situation or a dental problem or therapy.

In short, we think that Nexus can be part of a larger treatment in the following situations:

- vertebral malformations leading to neck irritation;
- orthodontic treatment, especially with known problems of asymmetry of the posture;
- temporary stress, e.g. caused by exams;
- a work situation requiring sustained malposition;
- stressful sports or hobbies.

In any case – Nexus is often worth a try, and quite frequently patients are surprised that such a simple appliance can be so efficient.

And equally often, it is put aside on the nightstand and forgotten after the problem subsides – to be rediscovered when the neck stress returns.