

How to Apply Traction (Decompression) to the Neck/ Pinched Nerve with a Mechanical Home Treatment Device

Neck (cervical) traction is sometimes appropriate for a pinched nerve or arthritis. The traction might take pressure off the nerve if caused by a disc or bony type encroachment. Neck traction may also give you some temporary relief from the discomfort of arthritis by decreasing the pressure on your neck joints.

Before using your over-the-door traction device, speak with your physical therapist or doctor to ensure that neck traction is a safe treatment for you. Also, before you try traction, I would suggest you watch and try the exercises in the video [#1 Stretch and Exercise Program for Neck Pain, Pinched Nerve, etc.](#) You might get relief from your pain with these exercises and not need to perform traction.

Warning: Traction should not be performed on anybody with a tumor in the cervical spine, or anybody with rheumatoid arthritis or an infection. We would also advise against traction for people who are pregnant, claustrophobic, have osteoporosis, or a hiatal hernia.

Finally, before you perform any traction on your neck you will want to know if traction would be of any benefit.

The opposite of traction is compression. First, we will determine if compression increases your neck pain or symptoms.

Take both hands and place them on your head. Lock the fingers and push gently down on your head while maintaining good upright neck posture. Did compression make it worse?

Traction: The best way to test to see if traction would be beneficial is to do the following: You should be seated. Find the prominent bumps behind each ear. These are known as the mastoid processes (shown in red).



Using the area of your palm between the two meaty parts, hook onto the bump with your fingers facing up. This should be done on both sides. Cup your fingers over your ears. Apply even pressure between your two palms attempt to gently pull up on the head. Did decompression or traction improve your neck pain or symptoms? If yes you can proceed to applying traction.

We would suggest that you do not purchase a mechanical traction device unless you have already found traction to be helpful. The machines are expensive, but they do work quite well. Research has shown that traction applied lying down provided for greater separation of the joints. We like the Saunders unit because it is easy to use and effective. It is also the only unit we have tried. Do your own research and determine which traction unit is appropriate for you and your budget. We have already created a video on the Over-the-Door Traction device which is much less expensive.

You want to set up the unit so that your neck is slightly flexed. Flexion of 20-30 degrees is optimal to stretch your neck muscles and open the neck joints.

Remove any jewelry (especially earrings), eyeglasses, and anything else in the cervical region that may get in the way or create discomfort. Loosen the shirt collar to better expose the neck region.

We have copied the specifications and instructions from the Saunders unit (see below).

Designed to provide safe and effective traction (stretching) to the cervical region (neck). The Saunders Cervical Traction Device requires no assembly and comes ready to use.

Designed with your comfort and rehabilitation in mind. This compact and lightweight device effectively stretches and re-aligns the neck and spine with assistance of a pump to achieve the perfect traction specific to your preferences. This device is entirely user-controlled with an easy-to-read pressure gauge measuring units in both pounds and kilograms, as well as 3 adjustable angles (15-, 20-, and 25-degree angles); ensuring a personalized healing experience for each patient. Your Saunders Traction device comes already assembled and requires no further assembly is needed.

- **Safe:** a physical therapist recommended and proven tool in rehabilitation with or without surgery
- **Effective:** customers feel results within days of beginning their home treatment with Saunders Cervical Traction Device
- **Easy to Use:** the device comes with 3 adjustable angles, an easy-to-read pressure gauge, and a hand-held pump; making it user friendly for all.
- **Comfortable:** Patented self-adjusting neck wedges with padding



Features

- No assembly required due to the device's integrated design.
- Handheld pump with pressure relief valve increases or decreases traction force.
- Applies up to 50 pounds of traction force.
- Neck wedges adjust to any neck size with the turn of a knob on either side of the device.
- Built-in angle adjustment with the options for 15 degrees, 20 degrees and 25 degrees
- No wire extension loop
- Includes removable head strap sleeve, carrying case, and a user's guide.

Specifications

- Dimensions: 11" x 15"
- Weight: 9lb

How to use

Saunders Cervical Traction Device is designed to provide traction to the cervical region. It stretches and re-aligns the neck and spine to provide the perfect traction in the comfort of home. The device requires no assembly and is ready to use out of the case. This cervical device applies up to 50 pounds of traction.

1. Lie on your back, positioning your body so the neck wedges cradle the middle or narrowest part of your neck and your head rests comfortably on the head pad. The neck wedges should contact your neck midway between the tips of your earlobes and the top of your shoulders.
2. Turn either of the adjustment knobs until the wedges have moved firmly against both sides of the neck.
3. As you settle into the Saunders Cervical Traction device, the neck wedges may slightly rotate and self-adjust to the contour of your head and neck, or you can rotate the wedges manually as needed for the most comfortable fit.
4. Secure the head strap over your forehead, just above the brow line. This strap should fit snugly.
5. Apply traction using the pump.

We would recommend starting with only 10 pounds of traction. The first session should not be over 3-5 minutes. Determine how your neck feels during and after the traction. If it makes your pain worse- STOP. If your pain remains the same or improves you can continue. Over time you may work up to 30 pounds of traction applied for 15-20 minutes if you desire. Stoddard suggested that between 24 and 30 pounds (11-14 kg) of traction was necessary for relief of radicular

symptoms (pain down the arm). You can perform traction 1-3x per day, but the first day we would only do it once.