

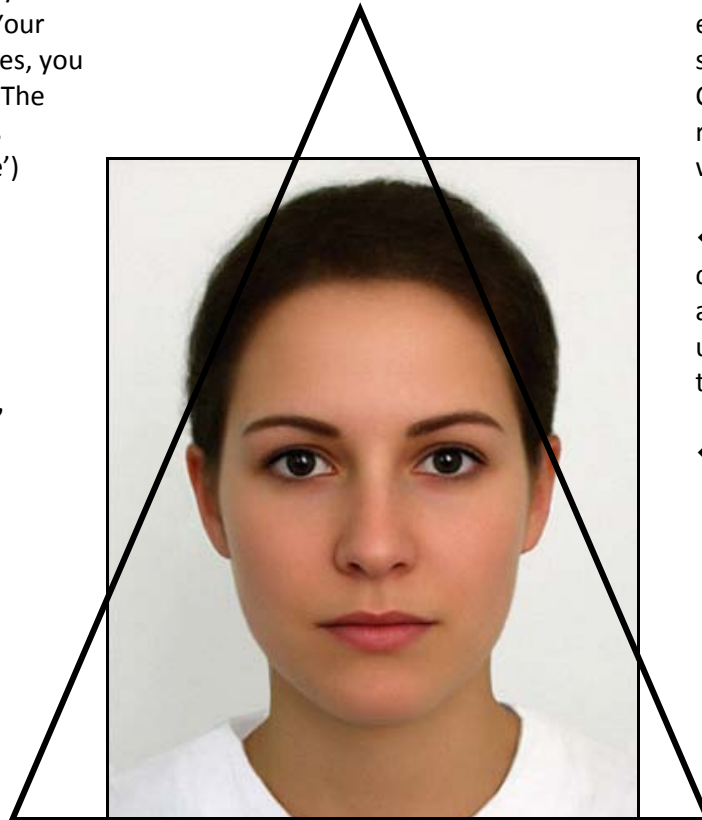
RELAX YOUR “STRESS TRIANGLE”

Exercises to Relieve Headache and Tension

Traffic gets worse. It's your busy season at work. The kids are arguing. Your shoulders tense, your neck aches, you feel as if your head is in a vise! The head, neck, and shoulder areas (which form the 'stress triangle') are the places where we hold much of our tension. Learning how to release the tension in these muscles can help us to relax and "de-stress."

Find Your 'Stress Triangle'

Place your left hand on your right shoulder. Move your fingers halfway in toward your neck. You're at one point of the triangle. The second point is in the same place off your left shoulder. The third point is on your forehead, between your eyes. This 'stress triangle' is where we hold much of our tension.



Your 'stress triangle' includes your shoulders, neck and head.

Why Tense Muscles Hurt

Your muscles tighten to protect you. That was important to your prehistoric ancestors who needed to fight or run. But usually, you don't need that protection. When your muscle shortens and then holds that position, "metabolites" (the waste products from muscle activity) get trapped, causing pain. The pain is released when the muscle regains its natural strength.

Stretch Away Tension

These simple stretches and rolls can help relieve tightness in your 'stress triangle.'

♦ **Neck roll.** Stretch your right ear to your right shoulder,

keeping your left shoulder pulled down. Roll your head down so your chin is on your chest. Continue on to your left side. Do rolls from side to side. Begin with eight, build up to sixteen.

♦ **Shoulder shrug.** Draw a big circle with your shoulders, one at a time. Start with four, build up to eight times, going forward, then back.

♦ **Pick fruit.** With one hand, reach up as if you were picking an apple from a tree slightly ahead and far above you. Go from one arm to the other, building up to eight times on each side.

♦ **Massage yourself.** Use your right hand to work on your left shoulder and left hand on your right shoulder. Work your fingers gently but

firmly, beginning with your shoulder blade, moving up toward the neck and including the scalp.

♦ **Standing body roll.** Let your head roll forward until your chin is on your chest. Keep rolling down as your knees begin to bend. When your hands are hanging near your knees, rest there a moment and slowly roll back up. Work up to ten times.

Welcome Release

At work, at home, or wherever you are, take a few moments to release stress. Use these exercises once an hour, if necessary. You'll feel better and prevent tension from building up in your body.

