

## Do you suffer with shoulder pain on the bike?

I have found that neck and shoulder pain on the bike can stem from 2 places:

1. **incorrect bike position**

have a professional analyse your bike position if you believe this is the problem but remember, even if your position is correct you still need to have correct function and muscular balance.

2. **bad function and muscular control of the neck and shoulders** in bike position

I refer to this as "the turtle". This is where the rider looks like he has lost his neck in his shoulders, his arms are straight, and resting on the bones with no muscular control. This is the lazy way for your arms and does NOT support your neck and shoulders.

Most shoulder/neck pain can be lessened by the following:

try this check next time you're out on your bike:

1. **Relax your grip.**

You don't need to strangle your handle bars ( what have they done wrong?) Think like you are playing the piano, fingers soft and ready for action only when needed eg braking, changing gears etc.

2. **Elbows are shock absorbers**

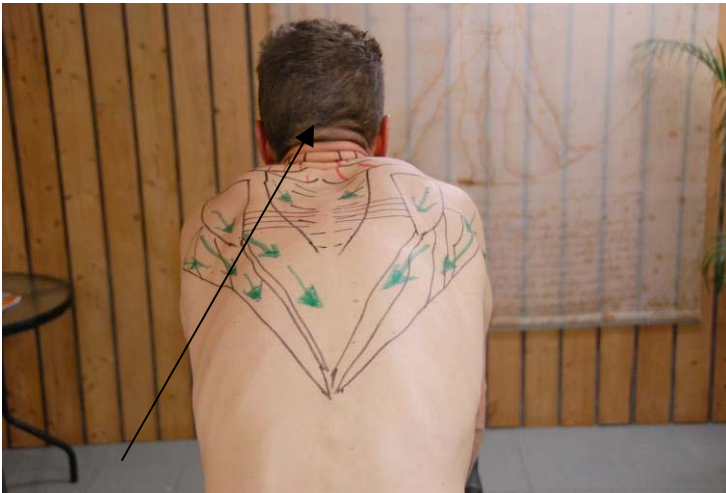
If you ride with your elbows locked out over any rough surface ( most roads in Belgium and the rest of the world) the impacts will go directly to the neck, which causes the muscles to spasm, leading to pain ( if you are watching Paris- Roubaix, I guarantee there will be no straight arms over the cobbles). Try to release the lock in your elbows to a soft elbow. I only mean a very small bend in the elbows so the muscles have to support the shoulders, and you are not just resting on your bones. So when you hit a bump in the road, you can react immediately, also giving you a better control over the bike.

3. **"The turtle"**

Check if your shoulders are not up by your ears ( as in picture 1.1). The muscles that are marked are called Upper Traps. Note in picture 1.2 marked in red the upper shoulder muscle. In good muscle function on the bike these muscle are soft and not doing too much work. but if you are a turtle they will be overworked and normally painfull.



1.1 Shoulder elevated upper Traps overworking



1.2 Upper shoulder muscle overworking and shoulders elevated

The easiest way to try and correct this is to think space between the ears and shoulders. The muscles marked in green picture 1.3 are pulling the shoulder blades down and the chest becomes open at the front. In turn, this will help with breathing, an essential part of cycling.



1.3 Green muscle are drawing the shoulders down and acting as a anchor for the shoulders, taking the pressure off the red muscles around the neck.

Please note the differences between picture 1.2 and 1.3, they are subtle but very important in the reduction of shoulder pain.

Please remember that all of the changes you make should never be forced and done gently. You need to build these movements up. Do not go out and try to ride in this position for 1 or 2 hours, your muscles will fatigue.

Drill while on bike: 10min normal shoulder posture, then check for steps 1,2,and 3 and make sure you ride correctly for 1-2 mins. Relax and repeat this throughout the ride. On your next rides increase the drill time by 30 sec until you can hold it for the entire ride.

If you feel your upper back muscles need some help with strength, here is a exercise that will help strengthen the correct muscle.

If pain persists, please seek the help of your therapist and have a professional check your position.



- 1) make body as long as possible
- 2) lift through stomach muscles
- 3) head lifts 1-2 cm, keep chin tucked
- 4) breath in, draw elbows back keep leg working and FULL stretch
- 5) breath out and extend arms back to full stretch
- 6) 10X3
- 7) Make your whole body work

2.1 and 2.2