

## A bit stiff-necked

by Alison Cullen

It is common to find mobility of the neck and shoulders to be less than ideal. We may not all be sporting neck braces, but many of us look enviously at owls with their swivelling heads. This increasing stiffness may be due to age or a sedentary lifestyle, or hours spent hunched, practically welded into place, in front of the computer screen.

- Do you regularly feel your shoulders gravitating towards your ears, as your stress levels mount?
- Do you work at a desk or have a job that involves lots of standing (hairdressers and shop assistants for instance)?
- Do you have a hobby such as playing a musical instrument that involves gluing your arms into place under a certain amount of strain?

It would help you to shake out the strain (gently) on a regular basis, with brisk walking whilst swinging your arms, careful peering over your shoulders, and general tentative head-turning—on a less ambitious scale to the owl. Adjust your posture frequently at work and play.

If you have a tendency to stiff joints, there are few appealing options, as most of the anti-inflammatory medications on offer carry unpleasant side effects with them, as those of you experiencing digestive discomfort or worrying about cardiovascular problems will know.

Nature, on the other hand, presents a safe and effective remedy that can benefit everyone without worrying about side effects. Devil's Claw has an anti-inflammatory effect all around the body, not just in one particular spot, so it's good if you have general aches and pains, as well as if you suffer in one area.

The best news is that the anti-inflammatory action of Devil's Claw doesn't block any of the body's natural processes, as some conventional medications do, so there is no danger of harming the kidneys or of causing any circulatory or vascular problems.

Also, you can complement by drinking large quantities of nettle tea to help to dispel uric acid. Avoid red meat and focus on getting all the vegetables you can

For muscular aches, pains and stiffness, try a gel made from extracts of freshly harvested Arnica flower heads. Arnica is traditionally used for the symptomatic relief of muscular aches, pains and stiffness.

Rub the gel into your neck, shoulders, and any other painful areas; or better still get someone else to massage it in. The gel can be used with other medication and can be used long term if necessary. Meanwhile, take steps to limber up, and look forward to having eyes in the back of your head!

