

OFFICE WOES: PAIN IN THE NECK

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If your work requires you to sit for prolonged periods of time, it can be a pain the neck. Literally. It can also be a strain on your back.

We spend far too many hours in front of the computers. Sitting for eight straight hours can cause stiffness and soreness that resonates from your lower back all the way up through your neck and shoulders. Many of us are also guilty of some nasty habits that leave us pretty sore in mere minutes!

A neck or back pain can not only ruin your work day, but it can also cause long-term complications if you don't take any action now. And I mean this literally, too!

There are a number of exercises you can do in the office to strengthen your back, loosen your muscles and minimise your pain.

These exercises can easily be completed while sitting in your office chair, so you don't even actually have to get up to do them. It is still advisable to walk around once in a while, though.



TIPS TO PREVENT NECK & BACK ACHES

1 Always choose a chair that has a high and firm back rest; it is a good habit to sit upright, resting the back against the back rest.

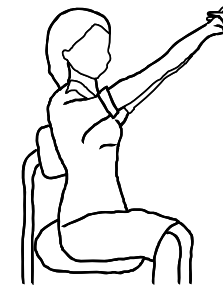
2 Keep the shoulders relaxed and elbows close to the body when using the keyboard or mouse. Your wrists should be relaxed and straightened when typing.

3 Ensure that your feet rest flat on the floor and the computer screen is at eye level.

4 Organise your workplace in such a way that you need not bend, slouch or twist your posture frequently.

5 Take frequent breaks to stretch your muscles. Do neck and back stretches to increase blood flow to surrounding muscles and tissues, reduce muscle tension and stiffness and reduce stress.

Do these neck and back stretching exercises two to three times in a day.



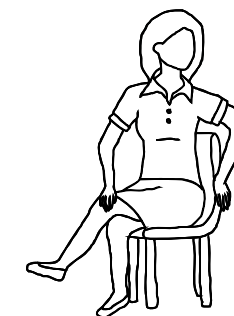
With fingers interlaced and palms out, straighten arms in front of you until the stretch is felt. Hold for 10 seconds.



While tilting the head to the left, pull the right arm down with the left hand until the stretch is felt. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat for the other side.



Lift up the right arm and reach up as far as possible until the stretch is felt on the side of the trunk. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat for the other side.



With left leg over the right leg, bring the right arm over the left leg. Push your left leg across the body until the stretch is felt. Turn the head over to the left shoulder. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat for the other side.



With hands in the small of the back, arch your back until the stretch is felt. Hold for 10 seconds.

Illustrations by Hannah Lee