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Posture: is it a pain?
Adult Musculoskeletal Service: a guide to good posture at work

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Are you experiencing:

- pain at work?
- neck pain, back ache and headaches following a day at work in front of the computer?
- wrist pain or tingling/burning in your wrists and hands following keyboard use?

Your work place layout and design as well as your posture may be causing your problems.

Simple alterations can improve your posture and reduce stress to your body, therefore reducing your discomfort.

Good working positions involve working with the body in a neutral position in which your joints are aligned and supported in their natural position. This reduces the stress and strain on the musculoskeletal system (muscles, ligaments, bones) and will prevent you developing a disorder.

Posture concepts are also applicable to your home life as well as when driving. This includes the sofa, car, armchair etc.

Pain in the neck?

Holding the phone cupped between your ear and shoulder can cause muscle tension and pain. If you use the phone regularly, get a head set so you can be hands free and keep your head straight.

Tingling or pain in your wrists and forearms?

If you are a regular computer user, your wrist position may be the cause. Wrists should be positioned in a neutral (not flexed or extended) position while typing. If held in a prolonged extending position, symptoms of tingling, numbness and pain may develop.

To help you achieve this position, a wrist support may be required. Some keyboards are already designed with this integrated.

Desk layout

Make sure all your tools for work (ie mouse, keyboard, papers, phone etc) are positioned in easy reaching distance. Having to stretch and twist to access pieces of equipment can result in strain.

Breaks from your work

If you work at a desk or computer, it is important that you take breaks.

Don't panic! These are only very short breaks and you will still get the work done - you will also feel better with less pain.

Every 10 minutes

Push your chair back and stretch your elbows, shoulders and wrists. Then stand up and stretch your legs. This will release the tension from your muscles.

Every hour

Take a short walk. This need only to be to the photocopier or another colleague's desk (instead of emailing). This will promote circulation, mobilise joints and stretch muscles. Taking these breaks will help you to get to the end of your day with less discomfort.

√ **Monitor** positioned directly in front of you at head height. Not too high or to the side. Having to repetitively look up or sideways results in neck pain.

√ **Computer** monitor should be at knuckle length from you when the arm is extended.

√ **Head** should be in line over your neck, and not poking forward.

√ **Wrists** supported in a neutral position while typing. Not extended or flexed.

√ **Keyboard** should be at elbow height.

√ **If** you use a mouse, make sure your wrist stays in a neutral position and your mouse is close to the keyboard.

√ **Hips** and thighs should be well supported by the chair.

X **Don't** cross your legs for long periods as this tilts the pelvis and can result in muscle pain.

√ **Feet** are flat on the floor or supported by a foot rest if unable to reach. This ensures no strain is placed upon the muscles and joints.

√ **Seat** should tilt slightly forwards so the edge doesn't dig into the thighs. Use a wedge shaped cushion if needed.

√ **The** back of your chair should fully support the natural curves of the back. If your chair is adjustable, make it fit you and not vice versa.

√ **Elbows** and arms should be supported by arm-rests when using the keyboard. Holding your arms up for prolonged periods of time can result in neck and shoulder pain.

Contact the Adult Musculoskeletal Service:

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