

# ***Monthly Wellness Update***

*Courtesy of  
Advanced Rehabilitation Clinics, Inc  
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## **Desktop Fitness**

**Part 1 of 2**

### **Tips to reduce neck, back and arm stress while working at a desk or computer work station.**

Ergonomics is the science of work design. Ergonomists measure the forces acting on the body while doing different tasks, then try to design jobs to have the minimum physical demand on the working body.

Work injuries to the neck, arms, and low back are very common in today's office environment. These injuries are not usually related to sudden trauma such as lifting injuries, falls, or direct blows. Most office workplace injuries are the result of sustained poor sitting posture and repetitive arm and hand motions. These injuries are referred to as Cumulative Trauma Disorders, or CTD's, and they account for half of all worker compensation claims today. Tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, and various other neck and low back problems are very real and they cause great suffering. They are difficult to diagnose and treat and sometimes end up as permanent, painful disabilities. The good news is that they are preventable.

If you work for an employer, it is their job to provide a safe working environment. It is your responsibility however, to properly use and care for your working body by paying attention to posture and body mechanics (how you move), and by doing regular, preventative stretching exercises to reduce strain on your low back, neck, and arms. By learning a few simple ergonomic principles, and applying them to desktop work, you can help to prevent injury and avoid pain problems.

### **Sustained Posture**

Sitting for most of the day and working at a desk or computer station may not seem like physically demanding work, but it is. Sustained sitting posture, even good posture, results in tension in the muscles that hold your head and shoulders upright. These muscles fatigue and tighten, leading to a more round shoulder, forward head posture. Working in a slouched posture with a forward head and rounded shoulders causes the muscles on top of the shoulders, as well as the muscles in the neck, upper back and low back to tighten, in order to

support the weight of the head and upper body. As the muscles tighten, they compress the blood vessels in the muscle, reducing the circulation to your arms. This reduced blood flow can lead to adverse stress on the muscles, tendons, and nerves in the arms and hands, possibly contributing to tendonitis or carpal tunnel syndrome.

## **The Work Station**

The computer work surface should be deep enough to fit your computer, monitor, keyboard, and a wrist rest (unless you use a keyboard tray). Placing the computer on the floor can save desktop space, should you need to. If you do use a keyboard tray under the desk, rest your elbows on the arms of the chair to support the weight of your arms and shoulders. Adjust the height of your chair so you can comfortably rest your forearms on the desktop. Using a wrist rest (or folded hand towel) to rest the forearms on will significantly reduce the stress on the neck, shoulders, and upper back. Making sure that your upper back is resting on the back of the chair will help to limit the stress to the low back by allowing the low back muscle to relax.

The monitor should be slightly below eye level, so placing it on top of your desktop PC is not recommended. Use a document holder to keep your paperwork upright and as close to the center as possible.

## **Telephone Posture**

It is a common practice to hold the telephone tightly between ear and shoulder to free the hands for typing or writing. This practice usually leads to serious neck and shoulder dysfunction, **DON'T DO IT!** Replace the telephone handset with a headset.

Working at a desk or being at a computer all day is physically demanding. Learning how to reduce strain on the neck, shoulder, and low back will help to make you more comfortable, healthy, and efficient on the job.

Stay tuned for Part 2 of Desk Top Fitness; “The One Minute Muscle Manager” where you will learn some practical, efficient, and effective exercises that you can do right at your desk to reduce workplace muscle tension.

Advanced Rehabilitation Clinics, Inc. has developed and Ergonomic Program in response to the increasing demand for better health and safety in the workplace. We have physical therapists that are not only certified ergonomic assessment specialist but also trained in some of the most advanced manual therapy techniques in the field, working in 8 therapy clinics around Chicago and its suburban areas. With extensive ergonomic training, ARC therapists are experts in identifying musculoskeletal, visual and environmental problems that occur. Our comprehensive program consists of an on-site workstation evaluation, ergonomic in-services and workspace design.

For more information please feel free to stop by Advanced Rehabilitation Clinics, Inc. located inside the Lifestart Wellness Center or to get a free assessment, where they will evaluate your condition and advise you of your options.

[www.arcphysicaltherapy.com](http://www.arcphysicaltherapy.com)

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