

Exercises for Office Workers

In recent years there has been a move towards more office-based jobs which has resulted in a nation of people who spend hours a day sitting stationary and hunched over in front of a desk. It is not surprising that a growing number of office workers complain of back pain. The lack of activity and movement as well as the bad posture associated with sitting in front of a desk all day means our backs are under a great deal of stress. However, despite this there are ways to protect your back from the strains of office work. Here are some tips on what you can do while at work to reduce the impact of back pain.

Top tips

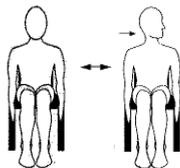
- ◆ Be aware of your **posture**, especially at work. Leaning forward at an angle at your desk or sitting hunched over for long period of time can weaken muscles and cause back pain. Improving your posture can help to prevent this. Try to sit with your back as straight as possible and your shoulders back. Ensure your buttocks touch the back of your chair and that your weight is distributed evenly on both hips
- ◆ Take regular **breaks** to move and stretch, roughly every 30 minutes. There are many simple stretches you can do at your desk as well as tasks that take you away from your desk allowing you to move eg making a cup of tea
- ◆ **Exercise** regularly and try to choose exercises that use all of your major muscle groups such as swimming or cycling. If you sit at a desk all day try to have some form of regular exercise scheduled outside of work to keep your joints and muscles healthy. Exercise such as yoga and Pilates are known to help people with back pain but any exercise you enjoy doing will be beneficial
- ◆ **Talk** to your employer or HR department about ways to adapt your working environment to ensure you are more comfortable eg get a new chair or any adaptations that can be made to your working patterns or activities.

Useful exercises

Here are some simple exercises you can do while seated at your desk. But remember to stand up and walk around and **stretch** regularly.

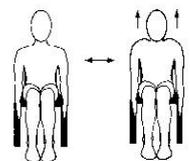
Lateral neck rotation

- ◆ Look to the left and hold for a count of three
- ◆ Return to central position
- ◆ Look to the right and hold for a count of three
- ◆ Repeat 10 times.



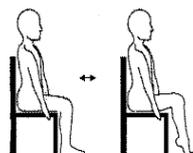
Shoulder shrugs

- ◆ Gently raise and lower your shoulders
- ◆ Try not to compress your neck
- ◆ Repeat 10 times.



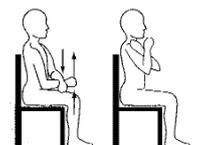
Seated calf raises

- ◆ Slowly raise your heels off the ground
- ◆ Hold for a count of three
- ◆ Slowly lower your heels back on the ground
- ◆ Repeat 10 times.



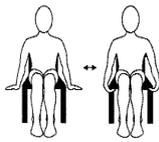
Resisted arm curls

- ◆ Place one arm on top of the other
- ◆ Gently raise lower arm against downward pressure from top arm
- ◆ Hold for a count of three
- ◆ Return to start position and swap arms (put lower arm on top)
- ◆ Repeat 10 times (each arm).



Wrist rolling

- ◆ With your arms by your side bend and flex both wrists
- ◆ Do this 10 times.



Hand/finger exercise

- ◆ Place an elastic band around all your fingers and your thumb
- ◆ Stretch the band as far as it will stretch by extending your fingers then release - never hyperextend your fingers
- ◆ Repeat 10 times.



Forward bend

Bend forward and let your head and arms hang over your knees. Relax into the position and hold for a few seconds. Breathe in as you slowly come back up to seated position.

Spinal twist

Sit facing forward and place your left hand on the outside of your right knee. Place your right arm over the back of the chair. Twist to the right while turning your head. Push against your right knee to create more leverage. Hold the position. Release slowly and come back to facing forward and repeat on the opposite side.



Side stretch

Sit facing forward with feet slightly apart. Raise your arms out to the sides. Bend to the left, reaching toward the floor with your left hand and your right hand pointing toward the ceiling. Hold for a few seconds then come back to starting position. Repeat with your right side.

Knee squeeze

Place both hands around the front of your knee and pull your knee to your chest. Lower your head to your knee and hold for a few seconds then release slowly. Repeat with your right side.



Leg lifts

Sit and hold each side of the chair for balance. Lift your straightened left leg and flex your foot. Hold for a few seconds then slowly lower your leg. Repeat the same for your right leg.

Sun pose

Sit back in the chair with legs apart and arms by your side. With a sweeping motion bring your arms up over your head. Look up and stretch. Bend forward between your legs and if you can put your palms on the floor. Slowly rise back up with your arms over your head again, and then lower them to the side.

