



TIPS TO SAVE YOUR NECK, SHOULDERS & Arms

If you have pain or discomfort in your neck, shoulders or arms, try these tips at work to reduce pain and prevent possible injury. Try these out and see which ones you like. Then focus on those for a week or two until they become habit. After mastering those, you may want to add another “good” habit.

1. The keyboard should be close enough to you that you don't have to stretch forward to reach the keys.

2. Avoid reaching far forward or twisting behind you to reach for things. Stand up, or turn and move close to the article you need. Store heavy books upside down so you only need to tip them forward and open to read, saving several motions.

3. Your mouse should be close to the keyboard where you don't have to reach to use it.

4. Keep your upper arms close to your sides, hanging straight down. Let your shoulders remain relaxed, not rigid.

5. Keep your arms and hands warm. Cold muscles and tendons are more at risk for overuse injuries. If you have developed an overuse syndrome, discuss adding ice therapy to your self-care to reduce inflammation.

6. Keep your head aligned with your spine, ears over your shoulders. Relax your neck and imagine your head floating toward the ceiling.

7. Don't forget to take frequent rest and stretching breaks. Take breaks to move and stretch every hour or so. Setting a reminder in your computer calendar can be helpful. Stretch your forearms by bending your wrists forward and backward and by circling your wrists. Stretch your neck forward and from side to side. Circle your shoulders forward, up toward your ears and to your back.

8. Consider eliminating some of the repetitiveness of your work. Can you vary your activities during the day? Combined with better workplace design, this can allow you to engage different muscle groups than just your typing muscles. Is it also possible to cut back your computer time? This may mean reducing your recreational computer usage.

9. And, finally, imagine breathing into your arms, neck and shoulders as you work. Rigidity is not the goal. Instead, focus on staying flexible and relaxed, even as you work. Take mini-breaks several times an hour. Stop, let your arms hang to your side and take several full breaths

RESOURCE: Repetitive Strain Injury: A Computer User's Guide. Pascarelli, Emil M.D., John Wiley and Sons, 1994.

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