

How to Sit Pain-Free at a Computer WorkStation with Neck Pain/Pinched Nerve

We hope to convey to you one of the key points with all forms of sitting and neck pain is the benefit of movement and change of position. An important tactic you can use to combat neck pain while sitting is to intermix the sitting with walking and movement. The person who attempts to sit with the perfect posture should still intermix change of neck positions, movement, and walking.

Adjusting your computer workstation

Many of you work at computer workstations. So, we thought it would be beneficial to discuss how your station should be set up correctly, to lessen stress on your back.



Computer Station

Working on the computer has become a common source of neck pain. Note the forward head posture of the girl in the photo. Many who work at the computer do so for hours on end without any breaks. As a result, the neck muscles and joints do not get any movement. Movement is needed to increase blood flow and keep joints healthy. As a result of poor posture combined with inactivity, we see many people who develop neck pain.

Recommendations for your Computer Workstation:

Always adjust your workstation in the following order:

- A. Chair
- B. Keyboard
- C. Mouse
- D. Screen
- E. Documents



A. Chair

Your feet should be firmly on the ground. If your feet do not reach flat on the ground, you may need a footrest. Ideally the footrest should be horizontal (not sloped), and as wide and deep as space permits. A large footrest surface encourages movement of your legs and feet while sitting.

Use a chair with a firm and upright backrest. If necessary, use a back cushion to provide support to your lower back (see chair section for review). If your back is in poor posture, it is likely your neck will be as well.

Avoid chairs with flexible backrests. The flexible backrest will usually encourage your back to settle into a “C” position and your neck into a forward head position.

B. Keyboard

Your upper arm should be vertical (straight up and down), and your forearm should be level (if you need to look at the keyboard quite often).

If able to type without looking at the keyboard, the keyboard may then be slightly sloped below level. (See picture) This allows your wrists to be as straight as possible.

C. Mouse

If you tend to use your mouse more than the keyboard, you may want to position the mouse in front of you, instead of off to the side. The placement of the mouse should be level with the keyboard.

D. Screen

Position the screen approximately 25-40 inches from your eyes. The further you can sit from the screen, the less fatiguing it is for your eyes. To find your ideal eye-to-screen distance, keep moving your screen further back until it is difficult to view. Then, slowly move the screen closer until it is the most comfortable distance from your eyes.

Most screens are placed too low. Use books or a stand to raise your screen up. The top of the screen should be at least a few inches above your eyes when your back, neck, and head are in good posture.

If you are using a laptop computer, it is essential for you to obtain a separate wireless keyboard. Position the laptop computer as you would a computer screen.

If you wear bifocals or trifocals you should purchase a pair of reading glasses designed to be used with your computer screen. Set so you can

comfortably view your screen 30-40 inches away. If you do not, you will be constantly putting your head forward and tipping it back to see through your bifocals. It is impossible to obtain good posture in that position and it can cause neck pain and headaches.

To avoid glare, tilt the screen slightly. Do not forget to blink. Dry eyes are a frequent problem for computer use, due to the tendency to stare at the screen. This can be especially bothersome to contact users.

E. Documents

Use a document holder to reduce stress to your neck and upper back. The document holder is generally best positioned directly below your screen, or to the side of it.

Remember to move. Get up every twenty minutes and do some standing chin tucks, neck rotations or neck extensions. Walk, whenever possible. While you are at the computer you can also intermittently perform shoulder shrugs, chin tucks, neck rotation and neck extensions.