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### Many of us are at risk of "irretrievable damage" to our spines, necks and shoulders because of bad posture when using computers

Stiff shoulders; neck-ache; headache; sore eyes; pain in your elbow; pain in your fingers? Do you recognise any of these symptoms? No you haven't just visited the gym for the first time in months; you've been working on your computer for the last few hours.

These symptoms might not be so bad if you experience them occasionally but if you experience them on a more regular basis then you could be at risk from suffering from long term health problems.

Most of us don't adopt the correct posture when we work on our computer. Understanding some basic principles will save time, money and pain.



#### How can I improve my posture?

Get someone to watch you working at your computer and check the following:

##### From the mouse side:

1. Are you sitting back in the chair with your feet supported and your knees no higher than your hips?
2. Are your forearms level and the upper arm relaxed at the side of your body?
3. Is your head upright and your back in a good supported position?

##### From the back:

1. Are you symmetrical?
2. Are your arms close to your body?

If the answer to any of these questions is **NO** then you need to alter your posture. To do this you might need to make some changes.

- You might need a chair which has more adjustment than your current chair provides.
- You might need to raise the height of your screen or increase the available depth of your desk space to achieve the correct arm position.
- You may need to change the way your desk is arranged so that you can sit straight in relation to your keyboard and screen.
- You may need to tidy up your desk so you have enough room on it to place your keyboard and mouse in a better position!

These are some simple adjustments that can really improve your physical health. But as well as good posture you need to consider where you are working.

- Is there enough light?
- Is the room in which you work hot and stuffy?
- Are you troubled by glare or reflection on your screen?



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Ask yourself what makes it difficult for you to feel comfortable when you work at your computer and you will probably find a host of low cost solutions that will make a big improvement.

- If you can't see your screen well because of glare from a window then change where your screen is located in relation to the window or put up a window blind?
- If you don't have enough light then purchase a desk lamp.
- If you have problems viewing your screen even after having adjusted the screen settings you might need to have your eyes tested and may need glasses for working at your computer.

None of the solutions we have identified so far will fully benefit you if you chain yourself to your desk for hours on end. Our bodies need to change position regularly. Discipline yourself to get up and do something different regularly. This will also give your eyes a break from the screen.

We are increasingly reliant on computer equipment and have yet to see the long term health effects of this reliance. If you feel uncomfortable when you have been working at your computer and you don't take steps to change that then one day you may regret it!