



VDU-Work Stations and Your Health...

How to set up your VDU-Work Station and improve your posture.

Most of our patients who work in an office environment have had their workstations assessed. But they still feel uncomfortable when working on their computer.

When we are given advice on how to set up our computer workstations we are always told exactly how to sit, how to adjust our chair's seat angle, how to adjust the back- and arm rest. We are also told what height the computer screen and desk should be.

All set – great! So why do you still get pain?

Why do you still get pain?

There can be many reasons, but let's focus on a few common things that can cause you aches and pains.

First of all, prolonged **static activities** such as sitting and driving will **compress the discs** and this presses the fluid out of the discs, which makes the **spine unstable**.

Muscles that are used in a **static** way have a tendency to **get tight** and become **achy**.

Move regularly!

It doesn't matter how correctly you sit you **need to move regularly**. Our bodies were made to move! It is not enough to just swivel your chair around and answer your phone occasionally. You need to get up and move, ideally **once every 30 minutes**. It is important to have **micro-breaks** and do a few simple exercises.

Mouse versus Keyboard commands?

If you mainly navigate and input data **using a mouse**, it is likely that you have **tightness in the muscles** of the shoulder and arm on that side.

Consider getting another input device such as a trackball, tablet or roller mouse.

Also consider learning more **keyboard commands** instead of using the mouse. It is also important that you can **rest** both your **forearm and heel of your hand** in front of the keyboard and rest your **elbows on the armrests**. This will allow the shoulder muscles to relax and stop them getting too tight. Don't forget to take a break!

Are you using glasses?

Varifocal or bifocal glasses will make you **tilt your head back** slightly. This will increase the tension in the muscles at the top of the neck and compress the joints. The **result** is often **headaches and neck pain**. So our advice is not to wear varifocal or bifocal glasses if you suffer from headaches and neck pain.

As mentioned earlier, most of our patients have already had an assessment of their workstation, but they are still not comfortable. Most of the time this is because they have underlying problems, causing muscle tension and poor posture.

How is your posture?

If you have a **slumped posture** you are more likely to have pain and discomfort. Is your **spine flexible enough** to allow you to sit with good posture? Are your **postural muscles** strong enough and do they have the endurance to help you to sit correctly throughout the day?

What effect can poor posture have?

Having a **muscle imbalance** will **cause poor posture**. Poor posture has also been **linked with poorer health**. A forward **slumped posture** is also associated with **restricted breathing**.

Bad posture has a lot to answer for - not only can it have a **negative affect** on your health but it could also have a negative effect on how **people** around you **perceive you** as a person. The first impression is everything. People make their mind up about you in the first 7 seconds of meeting you. Good posture is commonly associated with confidence, capability and good health. Poor posture can be associated with laziness, sloppiness, or a perceived lack of care about your appearance.

YourBody and Work Stations Continued...

Read more about **StraightenUp UK, a 3-minute exercise programme to improve your posture and core stability on our website.**

Back pain and neck pain can be caused by sitting for prolonged periods putting increased stress on the neck; arms, back and legs as well as the back muscles and discs. Sitting in a slouched manner can cause the spinal ligaments and muscles to become overstretched.

Poor ergonomics can cause damage to your body. The spine, particularly the lower back and neck, are the most commonly injured areas leading to recurrent pain.

How to Adjust your Work Station

Adjust your workstation following the guidelines below in order to help prevent back problems.

1. Elbows: Sit as close as possible to your desk with your arms parallel to your spine and hands resting on the workstation/keyboard. Adjust your seat up or down until your elbows are at more than 90°. If they are too bent you constrict the circulation and will be more likely to end up with a repetitive strain injury (RSI).

2. Thighs: Try to slide your fingertips under your thigh at the leading edge of the chair. If too tight, prop your feet up with an adjustable footrest.

3. Calves: With your buttocks pushed back against the chair, pass your clenched fist between the back of your calf and the front of the chair. If it does not fit, the chair is too deep and you need to adjust the backrest forward or insert a lumbar support to bring you forward.

4. Low Back Support: The backrest on your chair should be slightly convex to support the arch in your lower back. If it isn't, we would advice that you get a lumbar support cushion, causing your lower back to arch slightly. Also, make sure the support is adjusted to the right height. This will decrease the load and strain on your back. Do not slouch or slump over the chair.

5. Eye Level: Close your eyes and sit comfortably with your head facing forward. Now open your eyes. Your gaze should be aimed at the centre of your computer screen. But the top of your screen should be at eye level so you look slightly

downward (10-15°). If not, raise or lower your screen accordingly.

6. Armrest: Raise the armrests of the chair so that they support your elbows and. Using the armrest will take the strain off your neck and shoulders.

7. The Seat: The seat should have a forward tilt of 10-15° to allow a more natural position for your pelvis and lower back. If you can't adjust the seat you can buy a seat wedge instead.

Prolonged sitting and static posture is not good for the back. Remember to stand, stretch and walk for 2-3 minutes every half hour in order to keep the muscles, ligaments and joints loose, allowing you to feel more relaxed.

After all, if you are more comfortable you will be more productive and you will enjoy your day more!

Take a micro-break!

It doesn't matter how correctly you sit you **need to move regularly**. Our bodies were made to move! Not just swivel your chair around and answer your phone occasionally. You need to get up and move, ideally **once every 30 minutes**. It is important to have **micro-breaks** and do a few simple exercises.

Here is a short **micro-break** routine that you can do, simple but effective.

- Just get up and stretch your legs, walk over to the filing cabinet,
- roll your shoulders 5 times each way,
- shrug your shoulders (back and up, not straight up) 5 times and hold the tension for 5 seconds.
- Set the alarm on your computer and do this every 30 minutes. It only **takes 2-3 minutes** and will make a big difference for you.

If you are still not comfortable, you should have your back and posture checked!

For more information call ISIS Chiropractic Centres or go to www.isischiropractic.co.uk

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