

7 SIMPLE WAYS TO REDUCE POSTURE RELATED PAIN WITHOUT SPENDING ANY MONEY

By Nichola Adams, MSc Health Ergonomics
www.inspiredergonomics.com | info@inspiredergonomics.com

Do:

Raise your screen

Position any display so that the top of the screen is at eye level. Be mindful if you use varifocals however, as this may mean you need to have a lower monitor height than described. If you don't have a monitor arm or block, consider using a box, stack of books or a biscuit tin to achieve this.

Use separate input devices

Place your input devices within reach so your shoulders stay relaxed and your arms by your sides. If you're using a laptop, consider placing the laptop on a box or a stack of books (or a laptop stand if you have one) and keep your keyboard and mouse within reach.

Get up and move

The best posture is the next one. No matter how good your workstation set up is, you should be taking regular movement breaks. Try standing up and moving at least once an hour.

Reduce your risk of twisting

Position your display centrally to you. If you use another screen as a secondary display, position this to the side and angled towards you. If you use both screens evenly, sit between them evenly. Make sure your keyboard and mouse are central too.

Sit at a suitable height

Adjust the chair so your forearms are slightly higher than the desk with your shoulders relaxed. Your hips should be above your knees and you should have solid contact underfoot. If it isn't height adjustable, consider using a cushion, pillow or folded blanket to achieve this.

Get support for your lower back

Adjust the back rest (or lumbar support) height so the curves align with the curves of your spine. Set the angle of the back rest to support your upright working posture. If your chair doesn't allow this, consider using a cushion, pillow or rolled up towel to achieve this.

Stay hydrated

Staying hydrated can help to contribute towards improved cognition to decreased joint pain. It can also help to reduce the risk of eye strain. Consider using a small glass at your desk, so you have to stand up and move to refill it regularly.

Why is this so important?

Screen height

If the screen is too low for your eye level, it can encourage poor head and neck postures that can lead to pressure in the cervical spine. If the screen is too high for your eye level, you can be at risk of tilting your head back and adopting a 'poking chin' posture, that could increase tension.

Separate keyboard and mouse

If you use the integral laptop keyboard and trackpad and place these items so they are within reach, you cannot also position the laptop display suitably. If you raise the laptop display as advised, the keyboard and trackpad is moved out of reach and too high, which would encourage poor upper limb postures.

Movement

If we stay in a sedentary position for too long, we are at risk of slowing down circulation whilst increasing static loading of the joints and soft tissues. This can reduce oxygen and nutrient transportation and lead to a build up of waste products.

Centralised posture

If the equipment you use is not positioned suitably for its use, you are more at risk of adopting awkward and/or repetitive movements that can increase the risk of discomfort.

Sitting height

If the chair is too low for the working surface, you can be encouraged to elevate your shoulders and lean up onto the desk. If the chair is too high for the working surface you can be encouraged to lean over the desk. If your hips are lower than your knees, the natural curvature of your spine can flatten. If your feet don't have support, you can adopt a slouched posture.

Lower back support

If you do not have suitable lower back support, the natural curve of the lower spine can be compromised, which can lead to tension as well as poor upper back postures.

Hydration

If you become dehydrated, your cognitive function can be impaired, which could lead to a reduction in productivity and increased stress. Increased stress may increase the risk of physical discomfort. In addition, dehydration may increase the risk of dry and sore eyes.