

Avoid Shoulder and Neck Pain

Shoulder and neck pain is a common problem for office workers. Everyone seems to bury themselves in front of the computer, which, together with excessive workload and work pressure, forms a stressful working environment. If you work every day in such an atmosphere, it's difficult not to tense your muscles. Excessive concentration in work will lead to neglect of proper desk posture. Prolonged neglect will result in overstressed and exhausted muscles in the neck and shoulders.

Causes of muscle and joint pains:

Incorrect postures at work or elsewhere	Examples
× The body bending forth; the head sticking too far forward	Working too near the computer for a prolonged period
× Lowering the head over a prolonged period	Lowering the head for keyboard work over a prolonged period
× Bending the neck sideways over a prolonged period	Cradling the phone often between neck and shoulder

Incorrect postures pose unnecessary pressure on the cervical vertebrae and thus on the fasciae. This problem seems to be prevalent among office workers, who lack exercise in general. If the problem is complicated by emotional stress, then the tissues on the back and neck can further suffer, the pain arising from which may even disturb sleep and work. To ease stiffness and pain in the neck and shoulders and improve the joints, it is important to do exercise, especially stretching exercise, at work and elsewhere all the time. This can also prevent and cure neck and shoulder pain.

Prevention tips:

Purpose	Instructions	
Neck stretch (back/forth):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bend neck slowly towards the back, with eyes facing the ceiling. - Put one hand gently on the forehead to help. - Stop until you can feel that the muscles around the front of neck are stretched. Hold this position for 10-30 seconds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bend neck slowly towards the front, with eyes facing the floor. - Put one hand gently on the back of the head to help. - Stop until you can feel that the muscles around the back of neck are stretched. Hold this position for 10-30 seconds.
Neck stretch (left/right):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower left ear on left shoulder slowly; put left hand gently on right side of head to help. - When you feel the muscles on right side of neck is stretched, it's done. - Hold this position for 10-30 seconds. Repeat the procedures in reverse. 	
Upper back & shoulder stretch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lift arms up to the horizontal position. Move arms towards each other with back of palms against each other. Cross arms and cross fingers. - Push arms forward. Arch the back. Keep head relaxed. Contract abdominal muscles. - Hold this position for 10-30 seconds. Relax, start over from the beginning. 	

***Remarks:**

1. Repeat each exercise 2 to 3 times. Practise any time around the clock, including office hours.
2. Stretch as far as no pain is incurred; this is the rule of thumb. All movement should be kept slow and breathing should flow freely.
3. If alleviation of shoulder/back pain is not effected, stop at once and consult medical professionals.

To avoid shoulder and neck pain, we should look at the crux of the problem. First, stop using incorrect postures at work, and avoid using the same posture over a prolonged period. On your own time, stay relaxed, and exercise regularly for stress relief. Take a rest and do some stretching exercise every 30 minutes to one hour. That's how you can fight shoulder and neck pain and maximise health.