



Neck pain in office workers

Occasional neck pain is a common bugbear of the office worker, and the pain is usually temporary.

Here we'll look at what could be causing or aggravating the pain, and solutions to both alleviate it and prevent future issues. There are small changes within your grasp to help you enjoy a transformation in workplace comfort.

212,000 people in Britain reported a neck or upper limb issue in 2020/21¹



Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are injuries or disorders of the muscles, nerves, tendons, joints, cartilage, or spinal discs.

The 3 main causes of work-related neck pain

- 1 Our posture while working**
- 2 Not moving enough**
- 3 Stress**

1 Our posture while working

Are you leaning in towards your screen, with your back unsupported by the backrest, and your chin pointing forwards? This **'poking chin posture'** engages the muscles in the neck, creating tension that reduces blood flow to the head and can cause headaches. If there is pressure on or around the nerves in the neck, then this can cause referred pain in the arms and hands.

TIPS

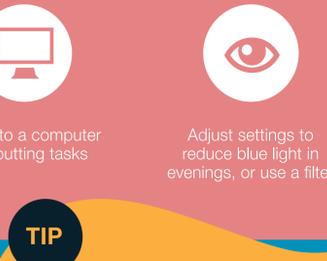
Top of the screen level with the eye line

Make sure your monitor is about an arm's distance away

Use zoom controls to help you see

Keep your back supported by your backrest

Ask a colleague to remind you if they notice you slumping forwards



Are you using your phone for long periods, hunching your neck down to constantly scroll? This can cause 'Tech Neck'

- Avoid using devices flat on the desk**
- Limit usage to short bursts**
- Make sure arm is supported if swiping**
- Consider using voice input**
- Switch to a computer for inputting tasks**
- Adjust settings to reduce blue light in evenings, or use a filter**

TIP

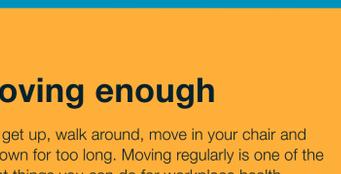
Use a document holder and position it close to your monitor to reduce head movements.



Glancing repetitively between your screen and documents causes you to reach to type, creating tension in the shoulders, upper back and neck.

TIP

Identify which screen is used the most, and place it in front of you.



Do you use more than one monitor? If you find you are getting neck pain, it could be that you're holding or turning your head repetitively to view one of your screens.

TIP

Make sure you're looking in line with the top of your computer monitor, and your forearms are level.

Your forearm shouldn't be jutting out at an angle to move your mouse around. Whenever you reach forward or to the side, you increase tension in the muscles around the shoulder and neck, which can lead to fatigue and pain.

TIP

Work with your upper arms relaxed and close to your body.

Avoid clamping a phone between your ear and shoulder. This can cause pain and tension in the neck and shoulders.

TIP

Use a headset so you can talk hands-free.

2 Not moving enough

Remember to get up, walk around, move in your chair and avoid sitting down for too long. Moving regularly is one of the most important things you can do for workplace health.

- Take 'postural breaks'**
- Enjoy an occasional stretch**
- Change your body position**
- Break up on-screen activities**

Going to make a cuppa, talking on the phone whilst standing, popping to another room to collect a document – they're all good for you! Mix up your day to include standing and moving.

3 Stress

We're humans, not machines. Look after your health, include stress-relieving activities in your lifestyle and ease unrealistic expectations of yourself at work.

Feeling stressed causes tension in the body, particularly in the neck and shoulder area.

Reap the rewards of dodging avoidable pain and create an enjoyable work culture for yourself.

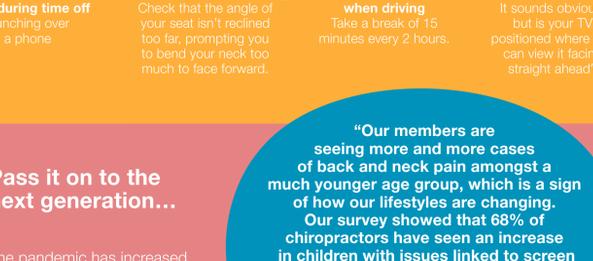
Which stress-relieving activities work for you?

- Escaping into a book**
- Exercising**
- Having a laugh with a colleague**
- Getting some fresh air**

Which exercises can help?

Here are 3 exercises we recommend to help reduce aches and pains in your neck and shoulders.

Always do exercises slowly and stop if you experience any discomfort or pain.



- Shoulder activity**
 - Raise shoulders towards ears until slight tension felt across tops of shoulders.
 - Hold for slow count of 10.
 - Repeat 3-5 times
- Shoulder roll**
 - Sit with back supported.
 - Slowly roll shoulders up and backwards in circular motion.
 - Repeat 10 times.
- Head position re-set**
 - Sit or stand upright. Without lifting chin, glide head straight back until a stretch is felt.
 - Hold for slow count of 5.
 - Repeat 3 – 5 times.

This guide has been approved by a Member of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (MCSP), 2022

What else might be contributing to neck pain?

- Too much screen time during time off** - Hunching over a phone
- Poor posture when driving** - Check that the angle of your seat isn't reclined too far, prompting you to bend your neck too much to face forward.
- Insufficient breaks when driving** - Take a break of 15 minutes every 2 hours.
- Poorly positioned TV!** - It sounds obvious, but is your TV positioned where you can view it facing straight ahead?

Pass it on to the next generation...

The pandemic has increased the use of screen time for children carrying out schoolwork too.

To avoid neck pain, and for their overall health, remind children to:

- Avoid sitting too long: get up and move around**
- Limit screen time**
- Raise their screen in front of them, instead of looking down**

Consider using a tablet or laptop stand, to raise the height of the screen for your child, and providing a separate keyboard.

What next?

Explore the ergonomic equipment available in the [posturite.co.uk](https://www.posturite.co.uk) online shop

Laptop stands, compact keyboards, sit-stand desks, supportive chairs, monitor arms, document holders, headsets and more

For further support for musculoskeletal issues in the workplace, visit [posturite.co.uk](https://www.posturite.co.uk) and find out how we can help.

Always seek individual professional medical advice if you are concerned about neck pain or another medical issue.

¹<https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/hssh2021.pdf>