



HEALTHY ERGONOMICS, HEALTHY LIFE

Tim Garrett offers some tips to reduce the effects of poor posture at work

Have you ever wondered if sitting for hours a day is natural, let alone any good for you?

The simple fact of nature is that human beings are not designed to sit down for very long periods. Do you think a caveman or woman would be sitting for three hours at a time staring at an object and doing over 100,000 finger movements? I think not.

This is why you need an ergonomics strategy – one that will counterbalance sitting disease and enable you to lead an amazing quality of life.

A healthy ergonomics strategy includes great ergonomic awareness, re-balancing activities, and exercises to stop or manage pain.

If you need some motivation to sit properly, get set up correctly and do what you need to do to avoid a potentially very painful daily existence, here's some food for thought. After approximately nine minutes the muscles supporting the core

completely give up, causing what exercise specialist Paul Chek describes as a 'naked spine' where all the pressure is put on the spinal vertebrae. The exact effect is a little different, but this is essentially what is happening.

This will cause you to sit badly, the typical bad desk posture being to hunch forward and in turn causes you to breathe from the chest, not the stomach like you should be doing. The result is stress on the fight or flight part of your autonomic nervous system, potentially causing a slowed metabolism, hormone imbalance and issues with sleep and recuperation.

That's not to mention the significant and very real possibility of horrible daily pain that can ruin your quality of life.

Here's a rundown of the strategy I recommend:

1. Great ergonomic awareness

It is important to realise that breaks from sitting are essential and are productivity investments, not a productivity cost. We recommend people have 10-30 second breaks every five minutes and a three to five minute break every hour. This means looking away from the screen, standing up and stretching or having a walk around the office.

The other essential tool is to realise when you are sitting with a natural S in your spine with your ear lobes directly

above the bony bit on the top of your shoulders.

It is key to distribute the load of gravity equally throughout the spine so you don't have problems in the future.

2. Re-balancing exercises

This is also a great way to give your energy levels a kick and spur your creativity.

Stretches, such as leaning backwards and looking up as well as stretching the side of your neck and the levator scapulae, are great examples.

I would also recommend using a foam roller to separate the spine as the spine can become fixed in the classic hunched forward position, making sitting properly very hard.

Go crazy with these recommendations (and others you can find by researching) for two weeks, before moving onto a maintenance phase at which point you can do the stretches three times per week for approximately five minutes each day.

3. Relief

To get rid of the pain from poor ergonomics is a beautiful thing. After your pain has gone away, you realise just how much it was affecting your whole life – something most people don't truly appreciate when it's happening to them.

Tennis ball trigger point therapy on the neck is something that can be a game changer, it is the perfect massage that can be done any time of the day or night to get rid of the knots in your body that are damaging and uncomfortable. It's the kind of thing you need to master to really get great at, but with as little as 10 minutes a day for seven days you will become a dab hand.

Other things that can work are cold pads. Holding them on the painful areas for one-minute stints, with a 30 second rest in between, for up to five minutes works wonders. A great massage can also help enormously.

If you apply yourself until these recommendations become automatic then you have the potential to live a life free from bodily pain and full of energy.



Tim Garrett is the founder of Corporate Wellness Co.