

## Sitting Posture

Desk jobs and other long term sitting occupations, like school bus drivers may not be terribly active, but they do have their own set of risks. Sitting in the same position for hours on end is itself a common cause of back and neck stress. Slouching or leaning forward in your seat adds to the pressure on your lower back. The similar habits of craning your neck forwards or tilting your head up to look at a computer screen, dropping your head down to write or read, or holding a telephone receiver between your ear and shoulder can be hard on your neck. In some instances the stress may extend all the way to your jaw or shoulders.

To avoid problem in such jobs, it is important first of all to develop and maintain good sitting posture. Good posture requires a firm backed chair, ideally one with arm rests for added shoulder and neck support. Sit back in the chair, with your knees just about level with your hips and your feet resting comfortably on the floor. When necessary put a small box or foot stool underneath your feet. An adjustable chair makes it easy to find the right level. Also be sure to pull the chair close enough to avoid leaning forward.

If you work at a computer, the monitor should be placed directly in front of you, just slightly below eye level. Some times placing the monitor on top the CPU raises it up too high; try another configuration to achieve the correct height. Also changing the height of your chair or desk is another option.

The keyboard placement should be on the desk directly in front of you about waist level. When typing, your upper arm and forearm should form a right angle. Your wrists should maintain a neutral position, being neither flexed up or down. There are also padded wrist rest and arm rest available to help you hold this position.

Finally, be sure to make time to stretch your back, neck and shoulders. If you work at a keyboard it is especially important to stretch your hands and wrists. During your free time, try to walk around and move your body. Simple things like this can decrease the amount of stress on the body's various bones, muscles, tendons, ligaments and disks. Frequent movement combined with proper posture helps keep the total stress on various structures to minimum and make sitting more tolerable.

*The above is intended as general information only. Be sure to contact your physician for advice or your own specific medical problems. Have a question? Write to Questions from the Field, Gananda-Walworth Physical Therapy and Village Fitness, PO Box 162, Macedon, NY 14502, or send e-mail to [gwpt@villagefit.com](mailto:gwpt@villagefit.com).*