

# health talk

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## Relieve The Stress From Your Desk

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If your career involves sitting at a desk, you spend approximately 50,000 hours at your desk in a lifetime. One-third of your day is usually spent in front of a desk and computer. These tools help you be productive but they can also be your worst enemy.

Your desk can cause you stress in the form of tight, tender, stiff, sore, achy muscles and or joints. This is most often experienced in the neck, upper back and shoulder region. The symptoms often begin as occasional discomfort, however they can manifest into chronic pain. This discomfort can become nagging to the point where it affects our work and daily life.



This stress comes from bad postural habits. As we get into our work we tend to creep forward. The neck and chin will push forward and the shoulders will roll forward. This slouched posture is not natural and puts stress in the head, neck, upper back and shoulder regions.

As the head creeps forward the spine adjusts to compensate. The spine has natural curves that help to support the weight of the body. In the neck (cervical spine) we have a lordotic curve and a kyphotic curve in the mid-back (thoracic spine). The forward head posture causes a flattening of the cervical curve and increase in the thoracic

curve. As a result there is increased stress on the joints in your spine, which can be the cause of discomfort. In addition this increases stress on the muscles.

This effect on the muscles can be best described by the Neurologist Vladimir Janda's Upper crossed postural syndrome. This syndrome is when forward head posture leads to the tightening of the muscles in the posterior neck and anterior chest plus weakening of the muscles in the anterior neck and posterior chest.

To help alleviate the stress on the body we need to reverse this process. We can achieve this by reducing tension in the tight muscles and using the weak muscles. A simple way to do this is to sit back into your chair and tuck your chin inward. Sit back so your shoulder blades touch the upper backrest. This will reduce the curve in your mid-back, stretch the muscles in the front chest and activate the muscles in the posterior chest/mid back. Tucking your chin inward will restore the curve in your neck, release the tension in the posterior neck muscles and activate the front neck muscles.

Now that you know the difference between the harmful (head forward/slouched) and helpful (shoulders back/chin tucked in) postures, you must be self-aware. Another technique that can be helpful is McKenzie's over-correction. When you catch yourself slouching forward, exaggerate rolling your shoulder back and tucking your chin in for 2 sec and then drop forward 10% into a comfortable posture. Use this posture correction tool throughout the day to reset your posture.