

Tension relief at the computer is just a microbreak away.

sitting at the computer

As the workforce has shifted from factories to offices, the incidence of back pain has increased dramatically. Researchers blame this increase on one simple activity that we do all the time – sitting.

Almost everyone who sits for long periods of time will develop back pain, even with the use of an ergonomic chair. It's not uncommon to develop other problems as well. Surveys of office workers indicate that about half of all employees have frequent pain or stiffness in their necks and shoulders. Repetitive strain injuries like carpal tunnel syndrome are becoming more common and about 10% of keyboard users experience wrist pain or discomfort. Who would have thought that sitting could wreak such havoc on your body?

Your body needs movement to operate effectively. If you have a sedentary lifestyle or sit for most of the day, your body is going to start complaining. You have to move.

When your muscles contract, you assist the flow of blood and lymph fluid through your body. The muscles act as a pump. If they don't contract regularly the blood in your extremities pools and you may get swelling of your feet and hands or those parts may just feel cold because the blood circulation is insufficient.

When you sit for long periods of time certain postural muscles, like your shoulder muscles, become overworked. These will tend to become short and tight from overuse whereas other muscles like your gluteals, abdominal and mid-back muscles, will become weak and atrophy.

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microbreak



Lean back in your chair and stretch your arms up and your legs out. Wiggle your fingers and toes. Then do circles with your ankles and wrists. Continue to reach up and back, close your eyes, smile, breathe in deeply and out slowly several times.

You just stretched away muscle tension built up in your hips, spine, and arms and refreshed your body with extra oxygen by expanding your rib cage. You also improved your posture as well as the circulation of blood through your legs and arms. All this in less than 30 seconds!

Caution: Before trying this micro-break, be sure to check your chair for stability so that you don't tip over.

If you have specific health concerns consult your medical doctor. The information in this newsletter is educational only and is not intended to replace the advice of your personal health care providers.