

PAIN - FREE DESKWORK

TIPS & TRICKS FOR HEALTHY
WORKING IN THE (HOME) OFFICE



**BACK
CHAMP**
www.back-champ.com

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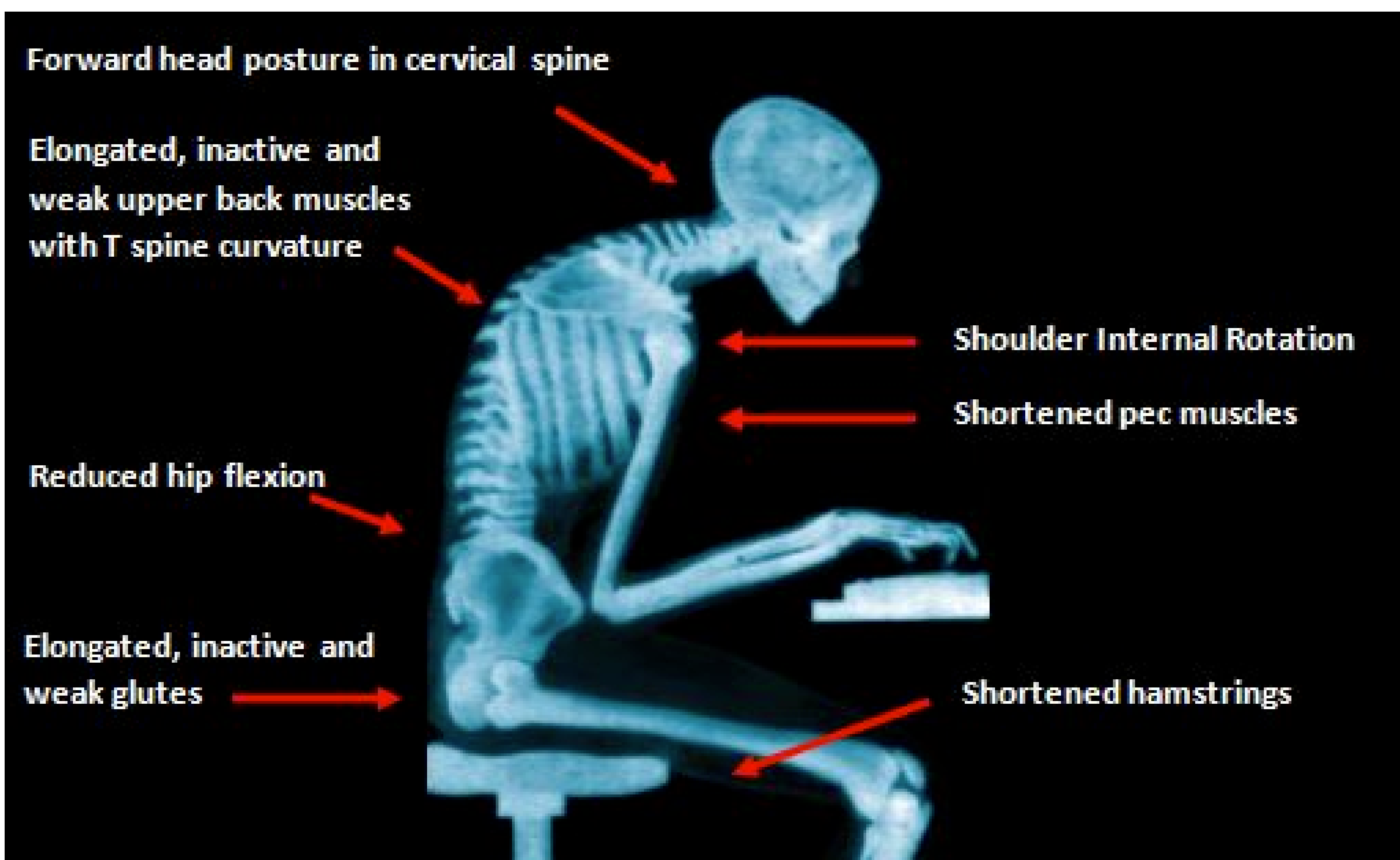
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Introduction: Is Sitting the New Smoking?



Working at a desk, especially for eight hours or more a day, not only affects your physical health but also has an impact on your overall quality of life, including your mental well-being. Sitting, often in suboptimal positions, puts a strain on your spine, promotes poor posture, and can lead to a range of health issues, from back pain to circulation problems. In fact, sitting is often referred to as the "new smoking" due to the myriad of health risks associated with it when practiced excessively and incorrectly.

This guide is your tool to regain control over your work habits and environment and pave the way to a healthier self.

Proper Sitting

The art of sitting is more than just a passive posture; it is an active practice that, when done correctly, lays the foundation for a healthy workday. Whether it's on an office chair or dining chair, the position of your pelvis is crucial.

Here are 2 tips to benefit your spine and posture:

- **Sitting Forward:** By sitting at the front edge of the chair, you allow your pelvis to assume a neutral position, which in turn promotes a healthy spinal alignment. This prevents you from slipping into a harmful posture that can cause back pain, neck pain, and tension.
- **Seat Cushion:** A seat cushion can provide additional support and help keep your pelvis in an optimal position to minimize pressure on the lower back and promote circulation.



Photo left: Mashable

There are also office chairs that have a forward tilt to ensure you're always in an ideal sitting position. My top "sitting hack" remains a dynamic chair, whether it's a stability ball or a chair that moves with your body. The reason is simple: Our bodies are complex constructs and are capable of movement. However, when we sit for several hours on a rigid object, our bodies have to adapt. This can lead to imbalances or discomfort. It's easier to have a seating option that can adapt to us instead of the other way around.



Photo: Wilkhahn



Photos: Vluv

Screen and Table Height

Having the screen too low can lead to chronic strain on the cervical vertebrae. Therefore, consider the following points:

- Vertical Position: The top edge of the screen should be at or slightly below your eye level to relieve neck strain and promote a natural head posture.
- Tilt: A slight tilt of the screen (10-20 degrees) prevents reflections and glare that could strain your eyes.

Often, the laptop is placed on the table or on the lap during hours of work, forcing the user to lean their head forward. This forward position, repeated for several hours, strains the cervical vertebrae. The best solution for this is to invest in a laptop stand and a wireless keyboard and mouse (even better: a trackpad).



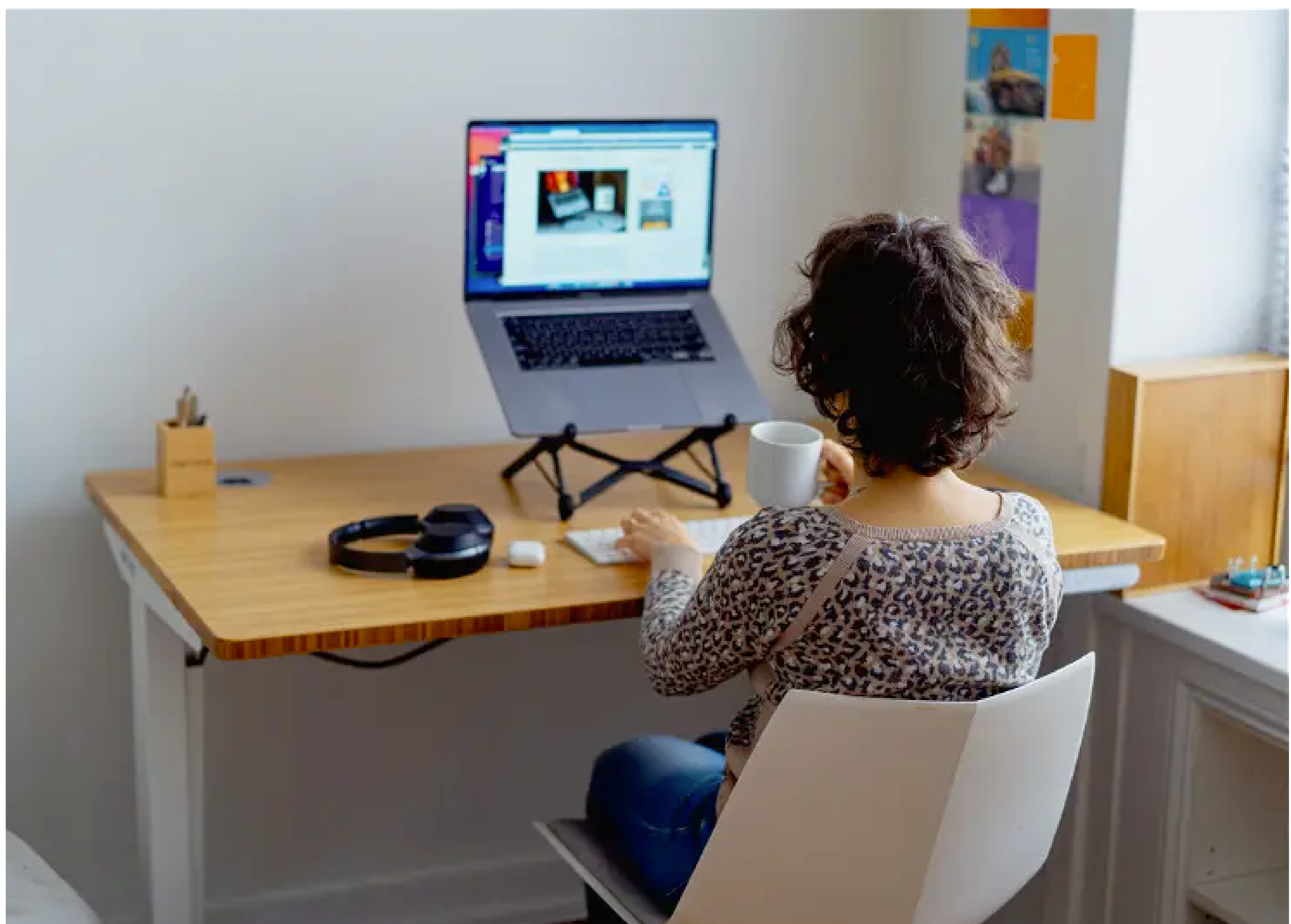
With simple solutions, you can raise the screen to a more optimal height, thus significantly reducing neck strain.



Ikea



GetUpDesk



Roost Laptop Stand

The height of your work table is a crucial factor that is often overlooked when it comes to creating an ergonomic work environment. A non-optimal table height can lead to an unhealthy posture and, over time, result in pain and discomfort. Let's explore the ideal height settings for both sitting and standing positions together.

Sitting Position

- **Table Height:** Your elbows should rest on the tabletop at an angle of about 90 degrees without having to raise your shoulders. This promotes a relaxed shoulder and arm position and prevents tension in the neck and shoulder area.
- **Legroom:** Ensure that there is enough space under the table for your legs and that you can comfortably stretch them out. Your feet should be flat on the floor while your knees form an angle of about 90 degrees.
- **Tip:** Use an adjustable chair to optimize the seat height to match the table height and ensure a healthy sitting position.



Standing Position

- **Table Height:** In the standing position, your arms should rest naturally at a 90-degree angle on the table without having to raise your shoulders. This allows for a relaxed posture and prevents strain on the shoulders and neck.
- **Foot Position:** Your feet should be shoulder-width apart and parallel to each other. Avoid shifting your weight to one foot, and instead, use a footrest to regularly change the position of your feet and minimize pressure on the spine.
- **Tip:** A height-adjustable desk (or laptop/screen stand) allows you to seamlessly switch between sitting and standing positions and provides the flexibility to change your working position regularly.



How to work with a standing desk

Using a standing desk is a fantastic way to incorporate movement into your workday, but how you use it is crucial.

- **Footwear:** Wear comfortable shoes or stand on an anti-fatigue mat (e.g., from Kybun).
- **Height Adjustment:** Ensure that the desk is at elbow height so that your arms can rest comfortably.
- **Movement:** Shift your weight between your feet and take short walks to avoid stiffness.
- **Time Management:** Alternate between sitting and standing to prevent fatigue.



Pro tip

Footrest: Elevating one foot on a raised surface like a footrest or an inclined surface relieves many passive forces pulling on your spine and makes standing more sustainable and comfortable. It also promotes better hip alignment and prevents you from tilting into a harmful posture.



Photo: TheReadyState.com

Gadgets & Tools

- **Ergonomic Mouse & Keyboard:** Choose peripherals that support a natural hand and wrist position to avoid strains and pain. A natural position is when your thumb points as much as possible towards the ceiling (called external rotation).
- **Monitor Stand:** An adjustable monitor stand allows you to customize the height and angle of your screen for optimal visibility.
- **Chair Supports:** Invest in a seat cushion that keeps your pelvis in a neutral or slightly forward-tilted position.



Photos: Microsoft / Logitech

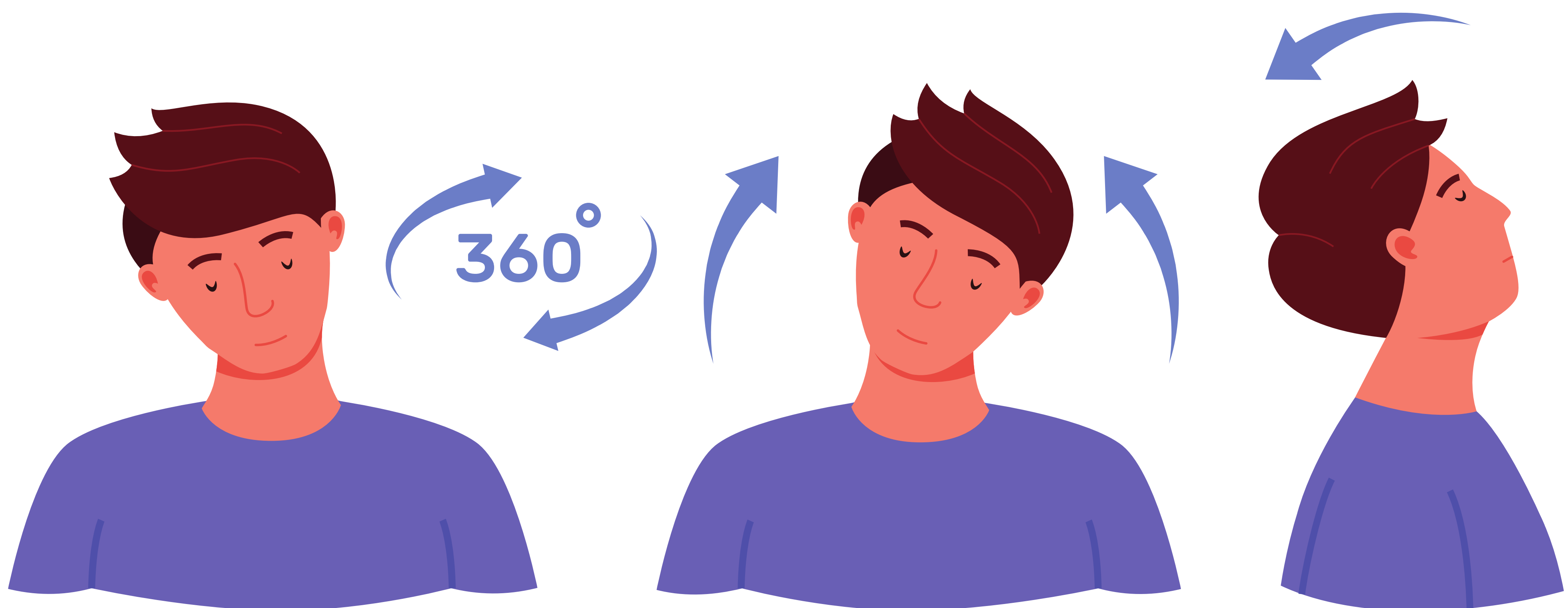
Exercises for Pain Reduction

Movement is an essential part of a healthy workday, especially when you have to stay in one position for hours. Exercises that counteract the forward-closed posture during several hours a day are particularly recommended. Here are some exercises and activities that can help reduce pain and strengthen your muscles:

- **Rowing:** Rowing, whether on a rowing machine or outdoors on the water, is an excellent exercise to open up the chest and stretch and strengthen the muscles that have become shortened due to prolonged sitting. It promotes back health, strengthens muscles, and improves posture by activating and strengthening the muscles in the upper back.
- **Seated Rowing at the Gym:** Seated rowing is a specific exercise that targets the muscles in the back. This exercise is especially beneficial for people who spend long hours at a desk as it helps strengthen the muscles often neglected during sitting. It helps to pull the shoulder blades together and promotes an upright posture, which is crucial for pain-free working.



- **Shoulder Rolls:** This simple exercise can be done right at your desk and helps release tension in the shoulders. Simply lift your shoulders up, roll them backward, and then downward. Repeat this several times and then reverse the direction of the rolls. This movement loosens the muscles and promotes better posture.
- **Neck Stretches:** Sit up straight and keep your head aligned. Slowly tilt your head to one side, bringing your ear toward your shoulder. Hold this position for a few seconds, then switch to the other side. This exercise helps release tension in the neck area and can prevent headaches and stiffness.



- **Eye Exercises:** To avoid eye strain, practice the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look at something that is 20 feet (approximately 6 meters) away for 20 seconds. This gives your eyes a break from the screen and helps reduce eye fatigue.
- **Hand and Wrist Exercises:** Simple exercises like wrist rolling or gentle finger stretching can help reduce pain and stiffness in the hands and wrists caused by constant typing and mouse clicking.
- Additionally, any exercise that opens you up (such as stretching your arms backward for chest opening) is beneficial.

Always remember that regular breaks and integrating these exercises into your routine can help minimize pain and improve your overall health and productivity. A healthy body promotes a healthy mind and allows you to work more efficiently and pain-free.



Bonus: Avoid the “tech neck”

Many people also spend up to 2 hours or more looking into their phones. The phone is usually held at a low position, forcing the head to tilt forward, thus causing stress to the neck and promoting a bad posture. Here’s an easy way to hold your phone higher: simple hold it in one hand and use the other hand to support the arm that’s holding the phone.



Photos: The pelvic PT

Checklist

Many people also spend up to 2 hours or more looking into their phones. The phone is usually held at a low position, forcing the head to tilt forward, thus causing stress to the neck and promoting a bad posture. Here's an easy way to hold your phone higher: simple hold it in one hand and use the other hand to support the arm that's holding the phone.

- Sitting upright on my chair (at the front or using a cushion)
- Corrector screen height (so that you don't have to look down)
- Correct table height (arms 90 degrees)
- Standing desk: options for different positions and movement
- Standing desk: an object to support one foot for bodyweight shift
- Ergonomic keyboard and mouse
- Movement and stretching at desk
- Compensating exercises at home or in gym
- Taking breaks, looking away from the screen every 20min
- Phone: holding your phone at nose level
- Drinking plenty of water

Conclusion

After working through this guide, you are equipped with essential strategies and tips to create a pain-free and productive workspace, whether in the office or at home. Remember that regular breaks, movement, and proper equipment are crucial to staying healthy and motivated. The important thing now is to put these learned tips into practice - again and again until they become a habit.

If you have any questions, I am here to assist you. You can email me via our website www.back-champ.com.

Happy working,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tommy', with several horizontal strokes underneath.

BackChamp founder & movement therapist

The logo for Back Champ, featuring the words 'BACK' and 'CHAMP' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letters are stacked, with 'BACK' on top and 'CHAMP' below it. The text is set against a dark blue, stylized background that resembles a shadow or a 3D effect.

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