

How to Improve Your Health Even When Working at a Computer: 5 Basic Tips

You work at a computer all day but are worn out by the end of the day just from...sitting? Do you have frequent headaches and neck pain? Is your low back tired and sore by the end of the day? If any of these sound familiar, check out these essential tips for working at a computer:

1. Monitor Your Screen Height

The top of your computer screen should be at the level of your eyes. People often have their computer screens too low, especially when working on laptops. This improper height can lead to muscle strains in the back of your neck which can cause pain and are often triggers for tension headaches.

2. Is that a Bowling Ball Sitting on Your Shoulders?

Imagine holding a 10 lbs bowling ball in your hand. It's pretty easy to do, even for a somewhat extended period of time, when the ball is close to your body. Next imagine holding the same bowling ball with your arm fully extended in front of you – you can envision that your muscles would quickly fatigue.

The same is true for the muscles in your neck when your head drifts forward toward the computer screen. **Your spine should be properly aligned to avoid increased stress on your neck and back.** Try to avoid forward head posture by working on doing chin retractions (giving yourself a double chin). It may look silly at first but you'll notice a reduction in neck pain almost right away.

3. Stand Up for Yourself

Many offices have switched to sit-stand desks in an effort to improve employee health, employee satisfaction and overall production. Those who used such workstations easily replaced 25 percent of their sitting time with standing and boosted their well-being while also decreasing fatigue and appetite!

For those workers that don't have access to a sit-stand desk, never fear – you can make your own! Try propping your computer up on a stack of books (remember those white and yellow paged books that nobody uses anymore...?), an overturned trash can, a printer or whatever else you can find. It may not be the perfect fit but if it allows you stand for a portion of the day, your low back (and your overall health) will thank you!

4. Get Walking

Why stand when you can walk? A treadmill desk is great but they can tend to be expensive. **If a treadmill desk isn't in the budget, you can still get moving.** Try walking while you're on the phone, walk to talk to somebody in the office instead of emailing them or even try to conduct some of your smaller meetings while walking. It may seem silly at first but the overall benefits of the increased activity will really pay off!

5. Try to "Pomodoro Technique"

Set the timer on your phone/watch for 25 minutes. During this time, really focus on your work and try to avoid outside distractions. When the timer goes off, get up and get active for 5 minutes. Go for a walk around the office, do jumping jacks, just take a break (but an active one). 25 minutes will go by quickly but so will the 5 minute breaks. These short breaks help avoid daily burnout and that afternoon slump.