

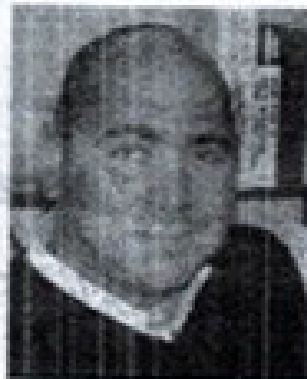
SITTING RIGHT CAN PREVENT PAIN

By Dr. Derek Conte

Many of my patients complain of a combination of neck and upper back pain along with carpal tunnel-like symptoms of numbness and tingling in the hands and fingers. With a few simple adjustments and stretches we are usually able to resolve the problem and send them away for a month before their next check-up. Sometimes, the patients return with some or all of the original symptoms. Why is this? In an effort to find out, I began to poll these patients by asking them to close their eyes and, from memory, assume the position they are in at work. A pattern quickly emerged: they are often sitting long hours, slumped horribly at a desk, head forward, shoulders rounded, arms outstretched, tensely slaving at a computer. In examining the position, it reminded me of a mild form of torture. After the adjustment, the patient is clear. But when they return to the old, bad postural habits to which they've long become accustomed, they undo some or all of the good we've done in the office. Clearly we needed to address this or they would never get the kind of lasting corrections we strive to give all our patients.

Overwhelmingly, we found (1 - the computer screens were too low - causing the head to hang down, straining the muscles of the neck and promoting headaches, (2 - the keyboards were too high - elevating and rounding the shoulders and extending the arms forward, causing chest and forearm muscles to clamp down on the nerves of the arms and hands, producing

numbness and pain and, (3 - the chairs did not support the low back at all - causing the spine to collapse into an undesirable "C"- shape. These forces, in combination, create a tremendous strain on the spine which, over a period of time, can actually change the shape (remodel) the vertebrae into a stiff, hump-backed appearance possibly leading to increased blood pressure, breathing problems and heart problems, because of the types of nerves exiting this upper back region.



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What we did was this: (1 - we discussed at length the flaws of the present position, (2 - we suggested raising the computer screens to eye-level to elevate the head and reduce the strain on the neck and back, (3 - suggested lowering the keyboards and bringing them closer to the lap to allow the arms to hang loosely and the wrists to be relaxed and, (3 - suggested sitting forward on the chair, directly on the ischial tuberosities ('sits' bones), allowing the whole pelvis to rotate forward re-creating the critical lumbar curve that supports the whole structure effortlessly. Finally, we adjust the spine appropriately and introduce specific stretches to eliminate muscular entrapments of nerves. Now, these same patients retain their adjustments for long periods of time and even share this practical knowledge with co-workers. That's what it's all about, isn't it?

Dr. Derek Conte is a founding member of Chiropractic Specialists in Smyrna on Concord Rd. and is available to talk to your business or group. For questions, call 404-784-6008.