

# Articulation

Hanneken Full Potential Physical Therapy Newsletter March 2011

## PREVENTING PAIN IN THE WORK PLACE & HOME

Do you ever feel tense after sitting behind a desk all day long? Does your work require you to stand in one position for long periods of time? Perhaps you may have to lift load after heavy load. Computer use, static posture, and heavy lifting can result in general fatigue and poor posture, back and neck strain, as well as other aches and pains.

One of the best ways to keep your back healthy while sitting, standing or lifting is to take frequent breaks to walk around and stretch. Initial aches and pains from the back and neck or other areas of the body are often ignored as one presses on with the work day. But if you choose to ignore these pain signals and the pressure continues to develop on tissues and joints, your body is at risk for further injury and increased pain. So how can you prevent this cycle?

One step in preventing pain at home and in the work place is to avoid static positioning. Any static, motionless, posture will become uncomfortable if held for a long period of time, regardless of position. Our bodies thrive with movement because it brings nutrition to our joints and enhances blood flow to soft tissue. Without movement, our joints and soft tissue structures are under significant stress. Static posture leads to tight muscles that limit range of motion and weak muscles that cannot provide adequate stability, both of which contribute to pain.

Although our bodies are not designed to sit for long periods of time, some jobs require individuals to spend countless hours at their desk and/or computer. Practicing proper

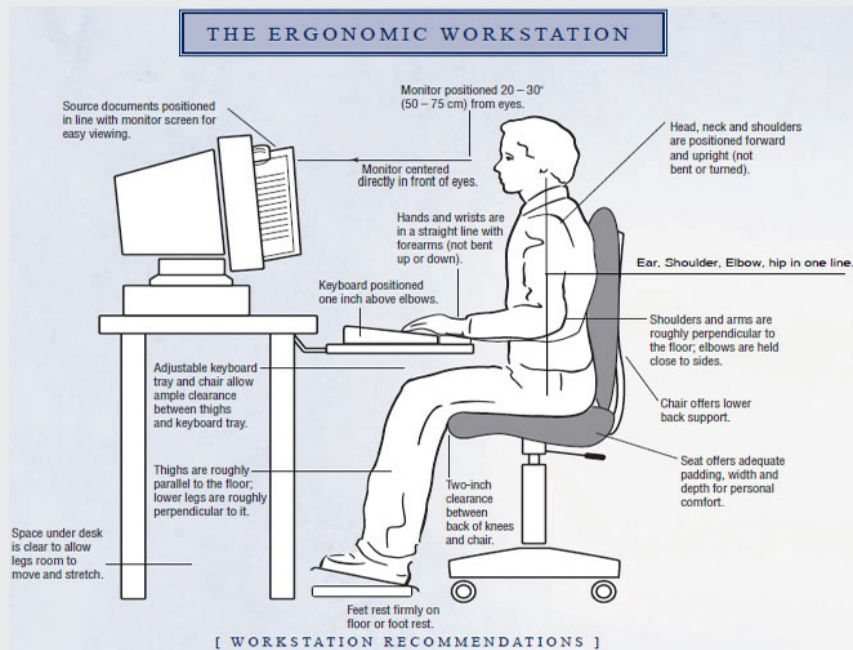
posture and positioning can help to counteract the stress that static positioning can place on your body. For those of you who find yourselves sitting for the majority of your day, consider these tips:

**Utilize proper work station ergonomics:** Do not lean or hunch over while working at a computer. Rest your wrists on a pad while typing. Your lower arms should be close or slightly below horizontal when your hands are working on the keyboard. Use an office chair with good lower back support, or roll up a towel and place it in the small of your back to support the curve of your low back. Place feet flat on the floor or on an inclined footrest when you are sitting.

**Take postural breaks:** Take brief breaks every 30 minutes or once an hour to stand up, walk around the work place or house for a change in scenery, and stretch to avoid the negative effects of static

positioning on your body. If your work involves standing for long periods of time, propping one foot on a small stool or on a ledge can help to decrease lower back pressure. It is also important to realize that frequent short breaks are better than fewer long ones.

Not all work environments involve static positioning. Many jobs and tasks require repetitive motion and lifting. Improper lifting and repetitive straining can lead to muscle fatigue, overuse injuries and back pain. Similar to static positioning, practicing simple stretches, as well as taking short walking breaks can be an effective way to reduce back pain and strain when engaging in repetitive movements or continuous lifting. Proper lifting techniques will also help to decrease the risk of injury. When lifting, remember to test the weight of the object before lifting and always keep the load close to the body, with one foot slightly in

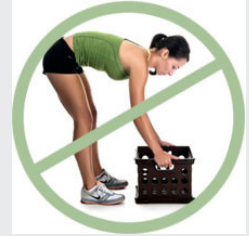


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front of the other. Do not bend over at the back and try to lift an item by straightening the back and using your back muscles. Instead, bend at the knees and hips and move your feet rather than twisting at the waist. Always use your body weight to push items that cannot be lifted rather than pulling items. Also, do not be afraid to ask for help from another person when performing heavy lifting tasks.



If you need additional assistance with managing your pain, posture, or body mechanics, consider seeking a referral from your doctor for physical therapy. Full Potential Physical Therapists are trained to recognize postural deficits and imbalances, work station flaws, and improper body mechanics and lifting techniques. We can prescribe appropriate exercise and stretching routines that are individualized for your needs so you are able to self manage your symptoms and make it through your day with less pain and improved function.



Although you may not be able to control all aspects of your day, one thing you can control is your posture. Remember to make yourself a priority and give your body the postural breaks it deserves!

Mari Hoppe  
Physical Therapist

# Full Potential News

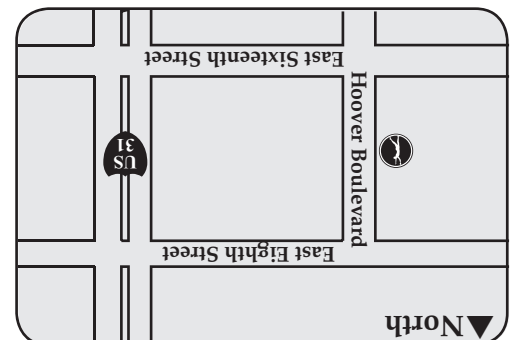
## What Our Clients Have To Say:

“(Before physical therapy) I had continuing lower back pain, could hardly do any activities. (Now) I feel so much better and now I can gradually get back to doing more activities and it feels great! If I get sore, I have the tools to get back on track.”

--- Tara Wiersma

For more patient testimonials, please visit [fullpotentialpt.com](http://fullpotentialpt.com)!

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