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Posture tips for deskbound workers

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Sitting for long hours daily does not do wonders for your health, science shows. But sometimes your job demands that you hole up in a cubicle, pecking away at a computer and digesting reams of fine print.

You may be deskbound, but experts say you can help counter the effects of sitting by incorporating certain activities into your 9-to-5. The trick is to break away from your station frequently - just

make sure you're getting your work done.

And when you must be seated, follow these tips to make sure your posture isn't hurting your body.

Sit up. Slouching can lead to neck and back pain, so shoulders back and chin up, people. Looking at yourself from the side, your ear, middle of your shoulder and hip should line up, suggests [Andrew Lui](#), a physical therapist who helps make UCSF employees' workstations ergonomic.

"Once we're in a neutral position, it decreases consequences both for the lower back and upper body," he says. He also recommends a chair that's supportive and cushions your spine, rather than one with a totally straight back.

Look straight ahead. If you're peering at your Gmail from way up high or down low, it's time to adjust your monitor. "When you're sitting in a nice neutral position, the top of the screen should be approximately eye-level," Lui says. The monitor should also be 18 to 30 inches, or roughly an arm's length, away to avoid eye strain.

Work on your feet. Take a phone call standing up. Deliver more messages in person than through Microsoft Outlook. Get a standing desk.

Can't afford one? "Purchase a music stand and put that beside your desk, so when you're reading papers, you can put paper on the music stand," says [Laura Putnam](#), founder of Motion Infusion and a volunteer with the [American Heart Association](#).

Get a move on. Find little excuses to break away for a few minutes at a time. Move a trash can to the other side of the office so you have to stand up every time you throw something away. Drink a lot of water so you have to get up and use the bathroom.

"We can reconfigure our office and cubicle so we can create more opportunities to move," Putnam says.

Don't forget. "You can have beeps and dings that you can set up on your computer, just to remind you to stand up," says [Nancy Wiese](#), medical director of the Occupational Medicine Clinic at [California Pacific Medical Center](#) in San Francisco. "You can maybe work it out with a co-worker to remind each other - you've been sitting there for four hours, it's time to move."

Move often. Take a break about once an hour, Wiese recommends. For those at especially desk-centric workplaces, like call centers, try every hour-and-a-half.

"It's really a discipline," Wiese says. "Nobody's going to do it for the employee. They have to take that on as their own strategy."

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