



## Workplace Wellness

### Training techniques for desk jockeys

by Melissa Carr, DrTCM, RAc

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You come home sore and aching after a day at the office. Do you wonder why—since your work involves nothing more physical than opening and closing your desk drawers and pushing yourself from your workstation at the end of the day?

Long hours at a desk can be a workout. Unfortunately, it's not the kind of workout that brings us better health. Office workers are in intense training for the Desk Olympics, but there is no gold medal to be awarded for the effort. Instead, the prizes include carpal tunnel syndrome, neck pain and stiffness, aching backs, eye strain, and headaches. The good news is that there are ways you can avoid these unwanted rewards.

#### Posture Makes Perfect

I'm sure you've been told this before: posture is important. Any activity that requires you to have your arms extended in front of you and your head leaning forward for long periods of time causes muscles of your chest, neck, back, and arms to be out of balance. Some muscles will feel like ropes tied with knots, too tense and tight to contract properly when needed; while others, rarely activated, will begin to fade away.

When you notice your shoulders hunch forward, take a deep breath and roll your shoulders back and down. The first few times you try this, watch yourself in a mirror. You shouldn't look like a soldier at attention, but you should look taller and more confident. Also, whenever possible, elevate the items that you will be focusing on to a higher level so you no longer have to lean forward.

#### Migrating and Hydrating

Use bathroom breaks as a chance to move and stretch, and instead of emailing your coworker in the next cubicle, walk over to deliver the message. Drink plenty of water. Keeping well-hydrated will help your body to detoxify from unhealthy recirculated air, lubricate your joints, help prevent the discs in your back from compressing too much leaving you much less protected against injury at the end of the day, and help avoid fatigue and headaches.

#### Need More Help?

Acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) can relieve pain, improve digestion, settle the mind, and boost energy. The National Institute of Health (NIH), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Arthritis Foundation all agree that acupuncture is effective in relieving pain and helping to heal injury.

A TCM doctor can also recommend Chinese herbals and dietary and lifestyle changes. If you've never tried a cupping treatment before, try it,



you'll love it! Imagine a massage with your muscles and fascia being pulled up instead of pushed down, thus stretching the tight areas, improving circulation, enhancing lymph drainage, and helping to eliminate toxins.

You work hard, but taking some simple measures at your office will help you avoid being awarded the Desk Olympics prize.

### How Do You Create a Good Workspace?

- Make sure your chair and desk are the right height for you. Your legs should be bent at a 90-degree angle with your feet flat on the floor. If your desk is too high for your chair, look for an inclined foot rest.
- Choose a chair with a good supportive back and arm rests that prop your arms when you type.
- Place your monitor directly in front of you, at arms' length away from your face, and with the top of the monitor at or below eye level.
- Select an ergonomic keyboard and wrist rest.
- Opt for a mouse that fits your hand properly.
- Use a headset so you don't need to balance the phone between your shoulder and ear if you talk on the phone as you type or write.
- Make sure you have enough lighting.

### About the Author

Melissa Carr, DrTCM, RAc, is a doctor of TCM with a focus on pain and injury management and workplace wellness. Visit [activetcm.com](http://activetcm.com)

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