

21 tips to a healthy workstation

WE ARE INCREASINGLY SPENDING MORE TIME SITTING, AT WORK, AT HOME AND IN THE CAR.

It is more important than ever that when we are at our workstations we are getting it right!

A healthy workstation is essential to our physical and emotional health and will leave you feeling energised and comfortable enabling you to leave work after a long day with a spring in your step.

There are a variety of factors that can influence how healthy your workstation is but the good news is that you have control over most of them.

A healthy workstation is about more than just having the right equipment it is also about how we use the workstation, how we spend our time at the workstation and our attitude towards it.

You may have seen some of these tips before but have you ever implemented any of them? Having a healthy workstation isn't rocket science as these simple tips will prove but it does require a conscious effort to break old habits on a daily basis.

Contents

- 1 Take a Seat
- 2 Make Work Easier
- 3 Lighten Up
- 4 Getting the Keyboard Right
- 5 Its a Pain In The Neck
- 6 Kick the Clutter
- 7 Grow a Desk Garden
- 8 Sitright
- 9 Keep an Eye on Things
- 10 Kick Start Your Metabolism
- 11 Get Stretched
- 12 Rub it out - Self Massage
- 13 Drink More
- 14 Reduce Caffeinated Drinks
- 15 Positivity Wins
- 16 Be a Social Being
- 17 Dress for Success
- 18 Reduce Stress
- 19 Time Management
- 20 Communication Skills
- 21 Don't Say Yes!

PART ONE: EQUIPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT



1) Take a Seat

Are you sitting comfortably? If not, you should be. If you slouch over your desk or perch on the edge of your seat the chances are you'll end up with posture to match.

How many hours a day you are spending sitting down? It's worth taking a few minutes to make a note and add them up, you may be surprised at the answer. Do it now and don't forget to include time at work, the journey to and from work, time at home watching TV, playing computer games, having meals, time spent out socialising etc. It is likely that you are spending over half of your waking day sitting so you owe it to yourself to be comfortable and get it right.

At its most basic you need to ensure that your chair is adjusted to your needs. Sitting at the correct height will allow you to sit up straight and work effectively. If you haven't already adjusted your chair do it now. It will save you a lot of discomfort in the long run.

2) Make Work Easier

If your desktop is organised, you'll be more productive and you will be able to reach the things you need with less strain on your body.

Place the objects that you use the most frequently closer to you, including your mouse. That way you're not continuously straining to reach for the same items.

If you are unsure of the correct settings for your chair get professional advice from your HR dept or contact us for details of our 60 seconds to Sitright desk check at 21tips@therapysolutions.co.uk we will be glad to help



3) Lighten Up

Just a few generations ago we would have spent most of our waking time outdoors working or travelling on foot these days we spend most of our days indoors in artificial light . People are like plants, we need plenty of natural sunlight to stay healthy and function well it is a basic requirement for a healthy body. Natural light is responsible for mental alertness as well as emotional wellbeing and is essential in the production of hormones. It is also the best source for the body of vitamin D.

Light deprivation can lead to a number of problems including stress symptoms, fatigue, mental foggiess, depression, hyperactivity, lack of concentrating, weakened teeth, bones and immune responses.

Make the most of the natural sunlight when you can, but lets be clear this should not be confused with sunbathing!

Too much strong sunlight can be damaging so enjoy good weather but always wear a protective sun cream.

Take a short walk during your lunch break before or after your shift each day, or just go out side during your lunch break it doesn't have to be bright sunlight just normal daylight will have a boosting effect and even if it is overcast, raining or cloudy the natural daylight will still be brighter than indoor light

Did you know? You need to be exposed to at least 1,000 lux of light We absorbe sunlight through our skin and eyes in order to receive the health and well being benefits of light. At daybreak there is already 800 lux of light in the atmosphere by noon on a bright summers day there is 100,000 lux Normal room lighting is only about 500 lux All natural daylight is brighter than normal indoor light.





4) Getting the keyboard right

Don't get too worried about how many centimetres away your keyboard should be you don't need a tape measure. This simple test from our Sitright routine will check your keyboard is at the correct distance.

If you have a right angle at your elbow your finger tips should just reach the middle **asdfghjkl;** row on a qwerty keyboard.

Did you know?...Hunt and peck!

Despite having more ergonomic keyboards than 30 years ago when there were only heavy, high action typewriters. There are still more cases of repetitive strain injuries, ever wondered why? One theory is how we type. In the past people would be trained as touch typists and would type without looking at the keyboard. Today many of us are self taught and use two fingers to type and need to look at the keyboard. We are constantly looking down causing strain to the neck area. This is know as the 'hunt and peck' method of typing as we have to hunt out and 'peck' at the keys



5) Its a Pain In The Neck

Constant incoming calls can be a pain in the neck at the best of times. But if you are using a hand held receiver or a mobile phone in the crook of your neck, it's can literally be a pain in the neck.

Holding the phone in that way will causes many aches and pains and it can lead to a lifetime of neck problems.

If you need to use the phone regularly, and keep your hands free to do other tasks, you need to use a headset or hands free kit.

6) Kick the Clutter

Organising your desk is like quitting a bad habit. In the beginning it feels like climbing a mountain, but it gets easier until finally it becomes part of your routine. Then you find that you're more productive, and best of all you can find those important documents in an instant.



If your desk looks like it has been ransacked, you need to tidy and de-clutter it. It may seem like a time consuming task, but you probably spend more time than you realise trying to find things and working in a cluttered environment.

- Take everything on your desk and put it in one big pile. Work through the pile from the top down. Never re-sort, never skip a single piece of paper, never put a piece of paper back on the pile. Do what needs to be done with that piece of paper, then move on to the next thing in the pile.
- If it takes less than 2 minutes to complete, deal with it now! Do not put it in your "to-do" pile and do not put it off. Clear it now.
- Be RUTHLESS!
If your workstation is overloaded with outdated directories and magazines recycle them
- Clean out your drawers! If you have 20 different note pads, get rid of some. Throw away pens that don't work and any broken stationery items.

Did you know?

If you tidy and de-clutter your desk, your mental clarity will improve, and fewer stressful thoughts will clutter your mind. Try it now. You'll be amazed by the results.





7) Grow a Desk Garden

Did you know that indoor air pollutant levels can be 20 to 100 times higher than outdoor ones? But don't worry a simple solution is a desk plant. According to a study by NASA plants filter and remove indoor air pollutants, and clear the air. So take a plant or two into work. Keeping them on your desk can vastly improve the quality of air that you breathe.

Good Desk plants include

Bromeliads

Peace Lily (*Spathiphyllum*):

Mother-in-law's Tongue (*Sansevieria*):

Walking Iris (*Neomarica bicolour gracillis*)

Check out the report on the NASA website

***"INTERIOR LANDSCAPE PLANTS FOR
INDOOR AIR POLLUTION ABATEMENT
SEPTEMBER 15, 1989"***

(Maybe this IS rocket science after all!!)



Part 2 Physical You

8) Sitright

Are you consciously aware of your posture while you work or do you slump so far over your desk that your colleagues think you've fallen asleep?

It's never too late to improve your posture.
Try to become more aware of how you sit and keep reminding yourself to maintain an upright position.

If you really struggle to do this, a tight fitting shirt that only feels comfortable when you sit up straight often does the trick.

Poor posture not only makes you look bad
it makes you feel bad too.

For more info, check out our SITRIGHT programme

Did you know?

Poor posture can cause a multitude of problems including diarrhoea, varicose veins, poor immune system, muscular tightness, repetitive strain injury, a flabby stomach, backache, and general soreness.



9) Keep an Eye on Things

You have two eyes and they need to last a lifetime, they are one of the most important tools you have, so take care of them.

Give your eyes a rest by occasionally looking away from your screen and focusing on an object that is further away to change your focal length.

Use a technique known as PALMING to rest your eyes.

Place your elbows firmly on your desk with forearms pointing upwards. Close your eyes and place your head into your hands face down. Gently manoeuvre your eye sockets so they are cupping the heel of the palm of your hands with your fingertips over your forehead.

Always have your eyes tested regularly, in case you need to wear glasses for work.



10) Kick Start Your Metabolism

Your first meal of the day is called breakfast for a reason. You're breaking a fast after a long period without food, so make time to eat it. Eating breakfast will boost your metabolism, so you won't gain weight as easily, it will also improve your concentration at work.

Porridge topped with fruit is an excellent way to start the day as it has slow releasing carbohydrates which will leave you feeling fuller for longer.



11) Get Stretched

If you are sitting in the same position all day long, you may sometimes feel a little stiff and uncomfortable. Use these simple stretching exercises while you work, they can all be performed while you're sitting at your desk.

Ankle Rolls: Roll your ankles a few times in each direction. This is a great way to prevent pins and needles.

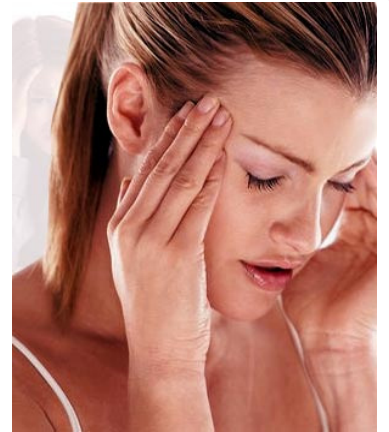
Calf Stretches: With your feet on the floor, lift your heels so the balls of your feet remain on the floor. Repeat this several times.

Shoulder Rolls. Roll your shoulders. First roll them forward ten times, then roll them backwards ten times.

Neck Stretches: To ease tension and strain, flex your neck forward, back, and then side to side. Repeat this several times.

Wrist Rolls: To prevent tightness in your wrists make a fist and turn in a circle to roll your wrists ten times in each direction on each wrist

Stomach: pull in and hold your stomach muscles for a few seconds, then release. Repeat this exercise several times.



12) Self Massage

Use these simple self massage techniques, to give yourself a quick massage at your desk. There are great physical and mental benefits to self massage. It stimulates your circulation, increases the flow of oxygen, and loosens stiff muscles. It also helps to increase focus and concentration, and eliminate stress and tension. Massaging your neck and head can also help to reduce headaches.

Arms and Shoulders: Using your right hand squeeze and release your left arm starting at the shoulder, and working your way down your arm and repeat with opposite hand and arm.

Neck: Use your hand to gently squeeze and release, working from the back of your neck to the top of your head.

Face: Begin by walking your fingers down your face from your hairline. Then massage your face and forehead using your fingers to make circular motions pay particular attention to the temple area.

13) Drink More



I'm not suggesting that you smuggle a flask of whisky into work.
The drink you need more than anything else is water.

Drinking plenty of water while you work is important for your health and wellbeing. But don't just wait until you're thirsty, as that means you're already dehydrated.
Dehydration is bad for your looks, health, and productivity at work.

Dehydration can cause many problems, including dry skin, skin flushing, fatigue, headaches, nausea, muscle cramps, and increased heart rate. So to stay looking and feeling good try to sip a full glass of water every hour and a half. If you find it difficult to remember, set your alarm to remind you to fill your water glass.

14) Reduce Caffeinated Drinks



It's easy to slip into the habit of becoming a coffee machine on legs, and you might feel that you need a continuous flow of coffee or tea to get you through the day. But too much caffeine can do you more harm than good.

Drinks containing caffeine actually dehydrate you, because caffeine is a diuretic, it makes you want to go to the toilet more frequently. Then you wind up drinking more coffee, because you quickly become thirsty again!

Too much caffeine can also cause fatigue, drowsiness, irritability, headaches and even temporary depression. So try to replace at least some of your daily consumption with water, or decaffeinated drinks.

Reduce the seesaw peak and trough energy levels and mood swings created with high sugar and caffeine drinks

Part 3:

The Mental and Emotional You

15) Positivity Wins

Negative talk attracts negative people around you
So no matter how badly your day is going,
do your best to stay positive.

Don't moan or complain about problems at home,
or small issues at work.

Avoid getting involved in backstabbing
and gossip at all costs.



When you're discussing a work problem, try to rephrase it, in a positive way. And remember to keep smiling. If you think and talk positively, you will feel positive and it will rub off on everyone around you.



Is your glass half full or half empty?



16) Be a Social Being

Scientific research has shown that having close relationship is good for your health. Having close friends strengthens the immune system, alleviates anxiety, and makes you happy.

So try to get to know people you work with. Chat with your colleagues over lunch. Be positive and friendly and always say good morning to everyone when you enter the office, and become involved in after office social activities.

17) Dress for Success

You may believe that it doesn't matter how you dress for work, so long as you do a great job but if your appearance doesn't cut it, nobody will take you seriously.

If you work hard, you deserve recognition, so make sure you show yourself off in your best light. Make sure you wear good quality, well fitting clothes that are clean and ironed, and always polish your shoes. If you're dressed for success, you'll feel more confident, and that will inspire confidence in others.

18) Reduce Stress

Work related stress can cause many health problems, including anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, insomnia, stomach problems, and difficulty concentrating.

If you're struggling to cope with work stress, there are many ways that you can reduce its effect. Try to get a good night's sleep, avoid excessive consumption of caffeine alcohol and nicotine. Get plenty of exercise and eat several small healthy meals throughout the day to maintain an even blood sugar level.

Stress is NOT an illness – it is a state

What is stress?

The Stress Management Society call it

“A situation where demand on a person exceeds that person's resources or ability to cope”



19) Time Management

Do you feel disorganised, overwhelmed, and overworked? Do you struggle to complete important tasks on time? Then maybe you should take a look at some time management techniques.

A lot of people don't take Time Management seriously enough, but it is a topic that should be taught in school. Many people struggle to manage their time effectively, and if you're one of them, it's easy to learn new habits.

Before you leave work in the evening, make a "to do" list and prioritise your tasks for the next day. Don't prioritise by the things you enjoy, make sure you do the most important jobs first. Give everything a rating of A B or C do the important A tasks first then the B's etc. Frequently by the time you get to the C's you realise they were not that important, it's easy to waste too much time on trivial tasks that don't really need to be done at all.

Deadlines are vital! Give each task a start time but also, importantly, a completion time.

A great quick to read book on Time Management is Eat That Frog by Brian Tracy.





20) Improve Your Communication Skills

Good communication skills can reduce conflict at work. Learn and practise effective communication to avoid unwanted trouble. Instead of complaining about a problem, try to turn the complaint into a positive statement or question.

And if you have a problem with a colleague, listen to their thoughts and feelings and paraphrase back what they say. Remember, you're trying to solve the problem, not win an argument.

Don't forget that others have problems too. If a co-worker is offhand with you, resist the temptation to snap back. Their problem may not be with you at all, it's more likely that they're just having a bad day.

And Finally...

21) Don't Say Yes

No one likes to say no but you can't always say yes to every single thing you're asked to do. (unless of course it is part of your job!) You'll just become overwhelmed, and you may end up letting yourself and others down. Learn to become assertive and say no without offending people. Also, if you're not able to make a decision on the spot, say you'll get back to them.

You're not alone if you struggle to say no. But it's important that you learn to, or some people will take advantage of you. If you need extra help in learning to say no, book yourself on an assertiveness training course.



Pick 1 or 2 of the tips on the list and start doing them TODAY

Remember, you don't have to do everything ... you just have to do something!

**Interested in finding out more about workstation wellbeing?
Take a look at our new online programme Sitright...**

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