Sick of Work

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Wednesday, 30 July 2008
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(This article is not meant to diagnose or prescribe treatment for any particular condition. Please consult with a qualified Chiropractor or MD in individual cases.)

Fact: One of the most common causes for herniated discs in the Lumbar Spine (low back) is long hours of sitting at a desk. An acute disc herniation can strike at a moments notice, sending debilitating pain down your leg, pain so intense it may even send you to the hospital.

Fact: A single incidence of poor lifting will not cause back pain or disc damage, but rather poor lifting over a long period of time, combined with compensatory postural changes.

Fact: As computers invade every home and office, the incidence of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and other related repetitive stress injuries have increased. This has accounted for decreased productivity and more days missed per annum than most companies can afford.

Fact: Those who keep long work days, have limited or no exposure to the sun during the day, or sit near a computer screen in a brand new office building surrounded by fluorescent lights, have more sick days than those who take breaks and receive natural sunlight.

Fact: As human beings become accessible 24/7 via email, phone and fax, the body does not have enough “down time” to repair itself from the mental, physical and chemical damage of the workday, resulting in the modern manifestation of Adrenal Overload Syndrome.

Work is killing us! Remember that a balanced life contains work and family, career and curiosity, and the trick lies in keeping your priorities in line. During the day, keep some of these tips in mind, to keep your mind and your body healthy:

Dr. Scott Donkins, in his book Sitting On the Job, recommends the 60-Second Stretch, and advises that once every hour you get out of your chair, take a glass of water, and move your body, from head to toe. Take off your shoes and roll back on your heels and up on your toes. Inhale and exhale deeply, three to five times. Smile, preferably into a mirror. Relax your shoulders and arms. This simple routine will release you from the stress cycle, reactivate the muscles of the body, and revitalize your mind.

The User-Friendly Workstation

In order to avoid straining your neck and shoulders, pay close attention to the placement of your terminal and screen vis a vis your files. Try to sit with your head facing the center of your body, rather

than turned to one side. Put the material at eye level, so you do not have to constantly look down or turn your head.

Pregnant women in particular should be aware of the potential dangers of long term exposure to the electronic radiation coming off a computer and the screen.

Notice how you hold your wrists when you type, keeping your wrist straight and your elbows at 90 degrees. If you are a right handed person, try to put your mouse on the left and learn how to activate your left hand, for balance.

Speak on the phone with a headset, avoid holding it to your ear for both postural reasons, and to prevent damage from the radiation. Work near a window in order to compensate for unnatural fluorescent lighting. Make sure the window can be opened, in order to avoid breathing in the spores from the air conditioning and heating ventilation.

And when you have to bend down to lift a set of files or something heavier, follow Proper Lifting Techniques:

Step One: Plant your feet firmly, placing them slightly apart

Step Two: Bend your knees

Step Three: Keep the load, no matter how heavy or light, close to your body. The further out you hold it, the larger the lever and the more work is needed to accomplish the lift.

Step Four: Don’t overestimate the weight you can lift and carry. You won’t impress anyone when you are bedridden with pain.

Step Five: Don’t come up too quickly, or over-rotate your low back and hip.

It all starts with awareness, and results in better health and better living.

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