

A photograph of a person with curly brown hair, seen from the back, with their arms outstretched horizontally against a wall. The wall is covered in white paint that is severely cracked and peeling, revealing a darker surface underneath. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the paint and the person's skin.

Neck Pain Prevention

Pain Prevention Advice and exercises for Necks

If you have a history of neck pain then the following advice could really help

- Focus on the main causes of neck pain
- Advice on how to adapt daily life to reduce the work load on the neck
- Really helpful exercises to improve flexibility and reduce the risk of neck pain recurring in the future



Hugo Firth

Osteopath & sports Injury rehab specialist

Qualified Osteopath from the London School of Osteopathy in 2014

With over 10 years experience and treating thousands of patients with neck pain

Hugo shares FIVE key advice tips and exercises to help people avoid neck pain

He runs a busy Osteopathy & Sports rehab practice in Kingston, London



Causes of Neck Pain

Whilst we hear of disc injuries and arthritis the main cause of neck pain is overworked or fatigued muscles

What are fatigued muscles?

Simply they are muscles that are overworked and have become strained

Typically a patient will say 'All I did was turn my head and my neck can't move!'

So in reality a small movement that the neck should have been able to do became too much and the muscles became strained and went into spasm

What has happened to neck muscles that they have become so weak that they can no turn your head?

The answer lies in what we do in our every day lives



Causes of Neck Pain

For many of us we have become more sedentary than our parents or our grandparents were

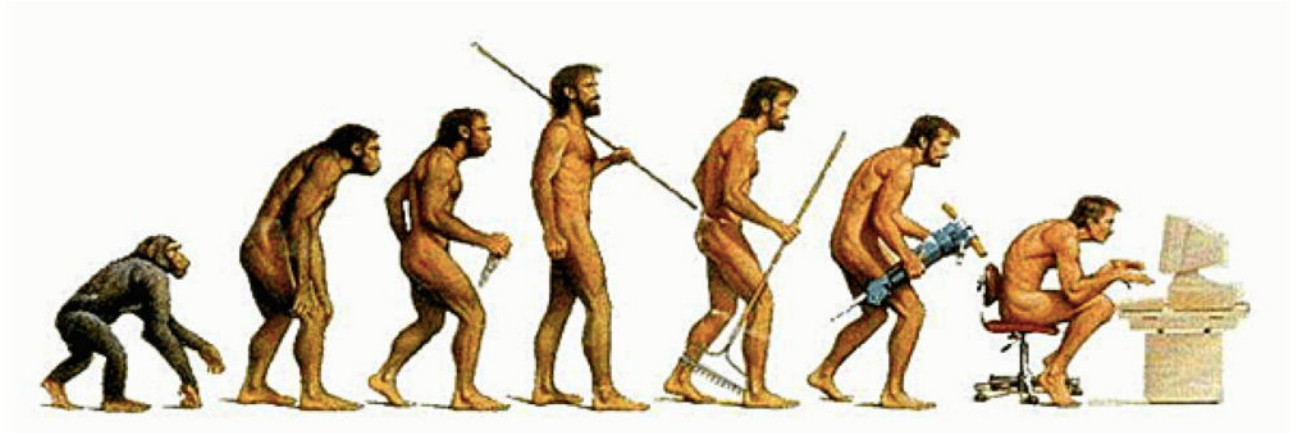
Our jobs are predominantly desk based

And with driving or sitting on a bus or train to get to work plus watching TV when we get home we can be sitting for more than 12hrs per day

Add to that the popularity of cycling and gym as exercise and we are still asking our bodies to be flexed (bent at the hips) , shoulders and arms forward

So our bodies could be forgiven for thinking that this is our desired position

Hips flexed, upper back arched, arms forward, head up!





Adaptability of our bodies

Our bodies adapt to the inputs they receive

Ask a body to sit , arms forward, head up for hours on end and it will readily assume that position

Neck muscles contract constantly to keep our eyes looking up at a screen

Upper back muscles will be more stretched as we reach forward to our computers

Pectoral muscles will become shorter as our arms are always forward

It has its advantages. We can stay in this position for longer and longer periods.

However It comes at price.....

The price we pay

Muscles in our shoulders, upper back and **Neck** are being asked to work in excess of 12 hrs a day in this slightly stretched or contracted position

The muscles (sub-occipitals) under the base of our skull are constantly contracted to keep our eyes level with screens causing stiffness

Muscles in our upper back and shoulders also become stiff through lack of movement during the day



Image is from 3D4Medical's EssentialAnatomy5 application.

How to Prevent Neck Pain?

Being static involves a lot of work for our neck muscles.

ADVICE TIP NO 1

We can change the inputs our bodies receive.

From a 'be static for 12hrs' to 'static for 58 mins then move for 2 mins, repeat x 12!'

If you change the messages that the muscles receive regularly enough during the day the body will adapt.

It will increase blood supply to nerves and muscles and joints. More oxygen and nutrients to muscles means less lactic acid build up and less fatigue.



How to Prevent Neck Pain?

Repetitive turning, looking up or down will increase fatigue in neck muscles

ADVICE TIP NO 2

Office

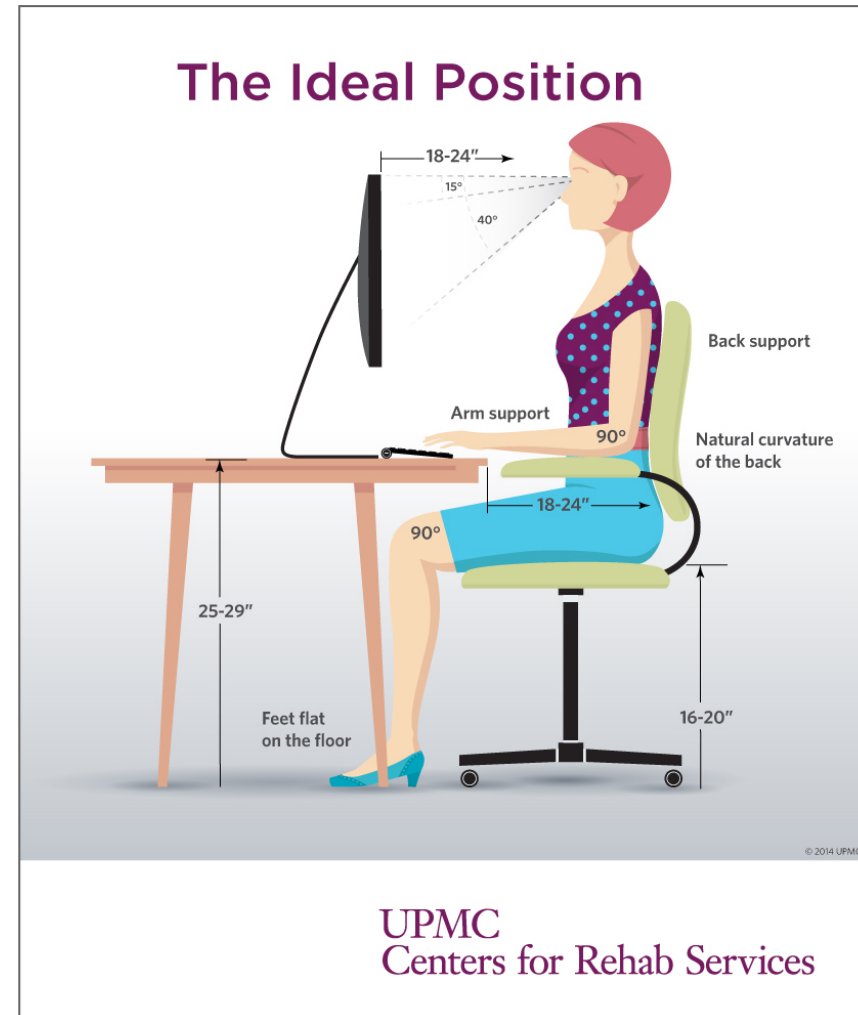
Check your monitor height

If you have more than one screen align the one you use most to be the one in front of you

Turn and face colleagues directly rather than turning your neck

Home

Make sure TV is directly in front of you- not too high or to the side



How to Prevent Neck Pain?

Sleep is the great muscle recharger. So it's important for neck muscles to get a good rest

ADVICE TIP NO 3

Get a supportive pillow

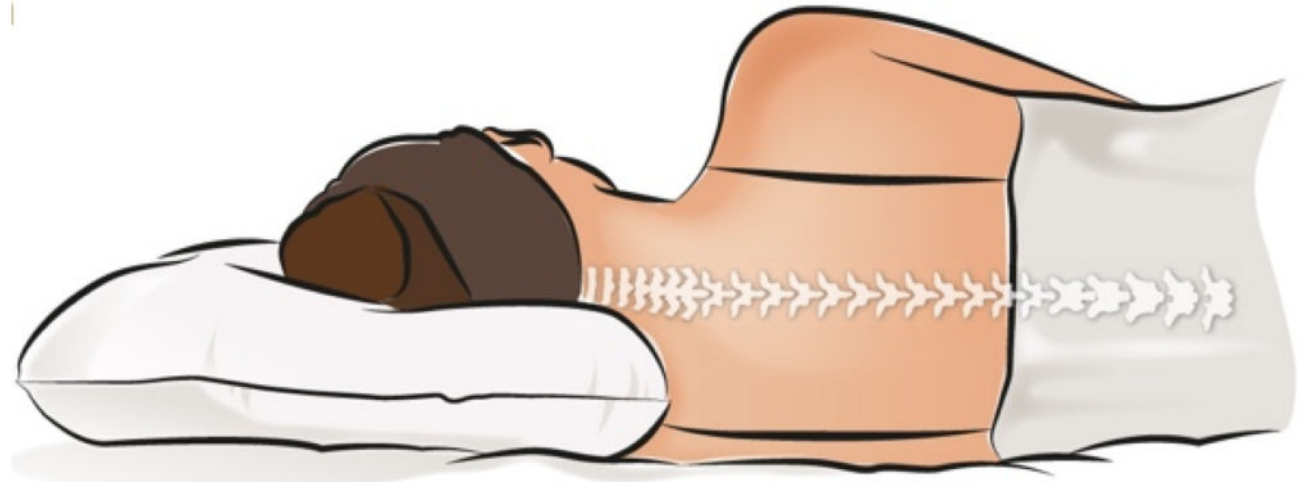
You need to have a NEUTRAL spine

Pillow needs to be firm enough and the right height to achieve this

To thin and neck muscles will be contracted one side and stretches on the other

Stop sleeping on your front

Have enough sleep 7-8hrs is ideal. This will give your muscles enough time to recharge for the day ahead.



Upper back exercise that can change your Life

ADVICE TIP 4:

(1) Ensure that your upper back maintains its flexibility

As with all exercises watching them is the easy bit. Incorporating them into your daily life takes effort.

(2) Maintain neck rotation mobility and prevent neck pain

This is a great way of maintaining and preventing a tight neck

But if your neck goes into spasm then this will be too painful

Seek the advice of your physical therapist

<https://youtu.be/aQQBn4QssWM?si=1OW7kwSCN9qQtj9>

<https://youtu.be/N3NVJd7HrRM?si=yI6HLCXuk5xTH25s>

Managing stress levels

ADVICE TIP 5

Everyone deals with stress in different ways

It can manifest itself as tension into neck and shoulder muscles

One way to manage it is through exercise or any activity that can ***stop you thinking about the stress causing issue for 30 mins or longer***

Here are some ideas

Go for a walk, paint/sketch, do a jigsaw, build lego, knit, go for a run, read a book, meditate

