

**Helsana**

Committed to life.



# Ergonomics in the workplace and daily life

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Committed to your health.

**How many hours do you spend sitting each day?**

**How often do you take a break to move around or relax?**

**Have you set up your workplace with an eye to ergonomics?**

Often your body will let you know: tension, headaches, eye strain, neck and back pain are all signs of postural issues. You can avoid physical problems and improve your well-being by following a few simple rules. Variety should be your watchword. No posture is healthy for long periods of time. Change and movement keep our bodies healthy and fit. Your health and physical well-being are precious.

We hope that this information about ergonomics will help you to stay healthy. We explain how to set up an ergonomic workspace to suit you and how you can avoid physical strain in daily life. We also have some ideas on how to take regular breaks in order to move and relax.

Have fun experimenting.

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# Office ergonomics



Every individual is unique – with a unique body shape. An ergonomic workspace is tailored to your individual needs so as to prevent poor posture and physical strain. Over time, poor posture at work can damage our muscles, ligaments, joints and spine.



# Set up your workspace

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## Chair

### Chair height

Your feet should be planted firmly on the floor. Adjust the height of the chair so that your upper and lower legs form a right angle. The angle between your thighs and upper body should be greater than a right angle.

### Chair depth

Your knees should not be in contact with the front of your seat.

### Backrest

Adjust the backrest so that you can lean back easily. Bear in mind that the backrest should still provide enough resistance to support your lower back when you are sitting upright.

### Armrests

Sit up straight with your shoulders down and adjust the armrests so that your elbows rest lightly on the armrests.



## Screen work

### Screen distance and height

Make sure your computer screen is directly in front of you. The screen should be at least at arm's length from your head – somewhere between 60 and 90cm. Adjust the height so that the upper edge of the screen is a hand's width below eye level.

### Light and reflections

Avoid sharp contrasts between the brightness of your screen and your work environment. Reflected light from windows and lighting is tiring for your eyes. Indirect light sources are best.

We recommend setting your screen at right angles to the window.

### Mouse and keyboard position

Place your keyboard directly in front of you. The keyboard should be 10–15cm from the edge of desk, so that the heel of your hands can rest lightly on the desk. Place the mouse close to the keyboard. This layout will keep your arms and shoulders as relaxed as possible.



## Desk

### Desk height

Adjust the desk height so that the angle between your upper arms and forearms is at least 90° with your forearms resting on the desk. The same principle applies if you use a standing desk. Your neck and shoulders should always be relaxed.

# Ergonomic equipment

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**Seat wedge cushion**

A seat wedge elevates your hips to ensure that the angle between your thighs and upper body is greater than 90°. This helps to reduce pressure on your spine. Make sure that your feet are flat on the floor.



**Wrist rest**

Long periods of typing puts strain on your hands, arms and shoulders. A wrist rest can help to ease the strain: whenever you pause, the heels of your hand and wrist can rest on the soft pad.

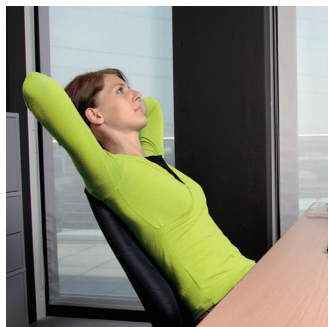


**Footrest**

Unable to reach the floor? Use a footrest to keep your feet planted firmly. The footrest should have a non-slip surface and a tilt feature; it should be at least 45 cm wide by 35 cm deep. All the same, don't let your footrest lull you into a static sitting posture for too long.

# Other ideas

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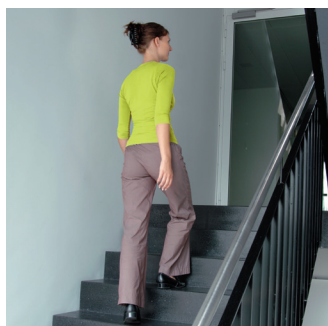


## **Change position**

Changing position allows nutrients to be carried effectively around the body.

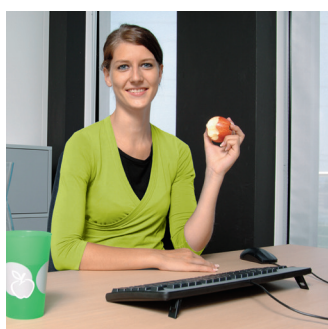
So make sure that you don't get stuck in one position at work:

- Take a break every 20 minutes if you have a sedentary job
- Alternate between sitting and standing at your desk
- Stand up to make phone calls or lean back in your chair
- Lean back every so often and support your neck with your hands



## **Move around**

Spending a lot of time sitting at work is hard on your body. Make sure you get enough movement during the working day. For example, take the stairs rather than the lift, or go to see people instead of sending e-mails or making phone calls.



## **Drink water and eat snacks**

There should be a bottle of water in every workspace. Most of us don't drink enough, which causes tiredness. When we are tired, we are more likely to make mistakes and be bad tempered. Make sure that you drink one to two litres of unsweetened liquids over the course of the day. Remember to drink with your meals and while you work.

Healthy snacking improves concentration and helps to regulate blood sugar levels. We recommend snacking on seasonal fruit and vegetables.



## **Chilly draughts**

Cold draughts can cause muscle stiffness. Make sure you close doors behind you and avoid sitting in chilly draughts.

As protection, arrange a jumper over your shoulders or your lap.



# Everyday ergonomics



Muscle tension, back pain and headaches are very common. They are often caused by poor posture and stress. Staying healthy includes making sure that daily pressures do not result in physical stresses.



# Sitting

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## **Watching TV and reading**

Use a cushion on armchairs and sofas to support your lumbar spine when you watch TV or read. The cushion will reduce the strain on your spine. Make sure you move regularly by slowly bending your whole upper body backwards, with your hands behind your neck to support your head.



## **Experiment with different positions**

Lie on your stomach to read and watch TV. This will prevent you from leaning forward. When you are standing and sitting, rest your head on your hands every so often to avoid straining your neck muscles.

# Carrying

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## **Lifting heavy objects**

Bend at the knees when you lift heavy items. Keep your back straight and make sure that your spine doesn't twist as you lift the object.



## **Carrying a load**

Hold heavy items close to your body. If this is not possible because the object might leave dirty marks, make sure you wear clothes that are easy to wash.

Divide heavy loads for balance and use both hands. You could also try using a rucksack, which distributes the load evenly. Ask if you need help lifting heavy items, and use wheeled carrying equipment.

# Other ideas

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## **Accident prevention**

To prevent accidents, make sure you take plenty of rests and drink lots of water. Remember: loose cables and raised carpet edges are trip hazards.

# Take a break



## Top tips

- Choose a spot for the printer that forces you to get up every time you print something.
- Go and see people instead of sending e-mails or making phone calls.
- If you have to stand in one place for a while – for example, at the photocopier – try standing on tiptoes or stretching.
- Use your coffee break as an opportunity to move around and enjoy your drink standing up.
- Keep work materials that you use frequently some distance away from your desk.

Build more movement and breaks into your working day. You will feel better and be more productive. Here are a few simple exercises that you can do at work. It is easy to build more movement into your office day by simply following our tips.

# Movement

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## Rocking

Sit upright on the edge of your chair and rock from one hip to the other.



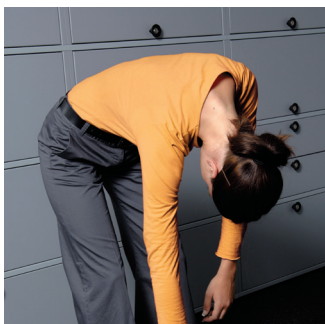
## Arm circles

Sit up straight and let your arms hang down by your sides.  
Make circles with your arms: rotate one arm forward and the other back.



## Marching in place

Stimulate your circulation when sitting by marching in place.



## Rolling the spine

Breathe out and slowly roll your spine down. Shake your shoulders. In-hale as you slowly return to standing and stretch your hands towards the ceiling.



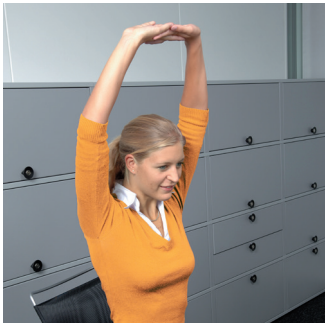
# Stretching

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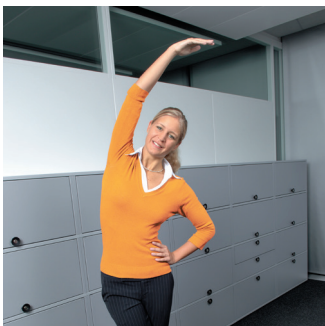
## Neck

Lean your head to the right and pull lightly with your right hand. Stretch your left hand gently towards the floor. Repeat on the other side.



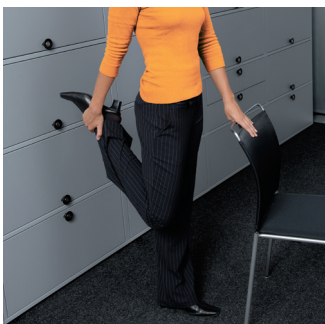
## Shoulders

Interlace your hands and raise your arms, palms up, until you can feel the stretch in the whole of your upper body.



## Upper body

Stand with your legs crossed, right leg in front; raise your right arm above your head and shift your hips to the right. Now lean your upper body to the left until you can feel the stretch in your side. Repeat on the other side.



## Quads

Raise one foot towards your bottom and push your pelvis forwards: you should feel a stretch in your quads (thighs). When doing this exercise, keep your standing leg slightly flexed and do not allow your back to arch.

# Relaxation

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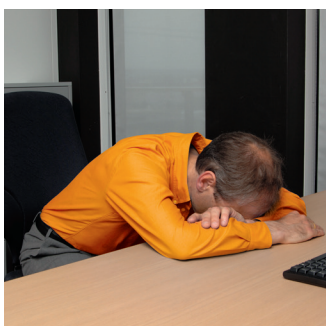
## **Relax your back**

Sit on the edge of your chair and lean your shoulders against the backrest. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.



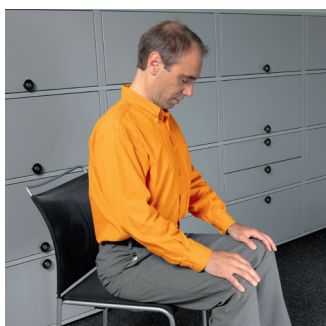
## **Relax your neck**

Sit on your chair so you are facing its back, with your elbows on the backrest. Rest your head in your hands and look down. Take a few calming, relaxing breaths.



## **Relax your upper body**

Cross your arms on your desk and lay your head on your arms. Take a few calm, relaxing breaths.

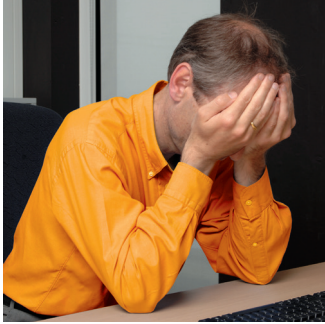


## **Breathe deeply**

Breathe out slowly. Press your chin firmly against your chest and hold your breath for a count of three. Raise your head and take a deep breath in. Your chest should rise as you inhale and fall as you exhale.

# Relaxation

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## **Palming**

Make sure you are sitting comfortably. Rub your palms together until they are warm. Lean on your elbows and place your face in your hands, so your palms create a space that covers your eyes. Close your eyes and stay in this position for a few minutes. Enjoy the change in your vision and hearing.



## **Stare into the distance**

Relax as you look into the distance. When you are doing screen work, look over the top of your monitor every so often and focus on something in the distance.



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