



SIT-UP-STRAIGHT WORKSTATION ASSESSMENT

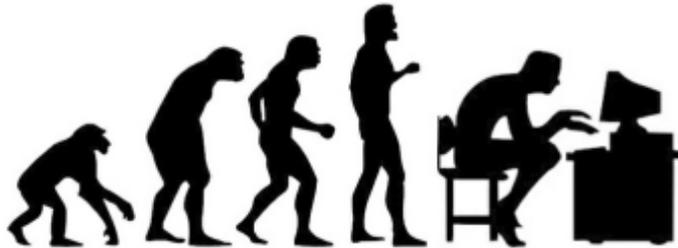
John Miller

Miller Health



Hi, I'm John Miller.

Here's what happened:



In the history of time, sitting down in front of a desk or behind a steering wheel is a very recent phenomenon. So is a crook back, stiff neck, frozen shoulder and an aching wrist.

It's usually the case that these dysfunctions are personally-generated; that's the bad news. The good news is that they can be personally 'ungenerated' with the sit-up-straight posture and a regular and systematic strength and flexibility training program.

Blaming the chair and the desk won't get you far.

The chances are an \$800 chair won't be much better for you than a \$7.95 folding chair from Bunnings.

The only requirement from the chair is that when you sit in it you can sit up straight.

Any chair that allows you to sit up straight is a good chair.



The quality of a chair is not based on how much it costs or the thickness of the foam rubber you sit on, but rather the ability to support you in the best possible posture.

Coupled with the chair is the desk and how close into the desk you sit). It's got to be the right height for you. I see too many 160cm people sitting at desks designed for people who are 180cm. Sit up straight.

John Miller

Sit up straight
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Neither chair, nor desk, nor monitor, nor keyboard, nor mouse, nor doctor, nor physio, nor chiro, nor surgeon, nor chemist, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing known to mankind will protect you from a crook back, stiff neck, 'cold' shoulder and RSI if you don't sit up straight.

THE PROBLEM

Over the years I've learnt a lot from watching people sitting at their desks.

I see them sitting in chairs that are the wrong height, chairs where the back-rest isn't upright. I see them sitting at desks that are also the wrong height.

90% of the people I see at their desks are sitting miles away from the desk - and 90% of those people are in the 'slump dog' position.

I know that 50% of people, when asked to rate the current condition of their musculo-skeletal system give themselves 5/10 or less.



Part of the agony is caused by their sitting posture but a lot of it comes from tight calf, hamstring and buttock muscles.

These people don't understand that the cost of sitting down all day comes at a price – the need to keep your skeleton in correct alignment. That comes from a flexibility training program.

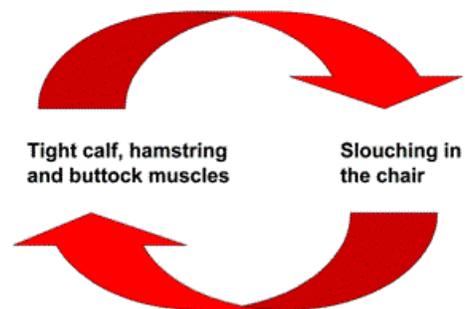
Then I see people blaming their back and shoulder pain on a lifting incident that people in good musculo-skeletal health take in their stride. If you don't have a strength training program, be prepared to put up with a crook back, sore wrists, and a stiff neck.

These people are struggling to do one pressup, one squat and one situp. They don't have a set of dumbbells to strengthen their arms, shoulders and wrists.

THE SITTING DOWN VICIOUS CYCLE

Slumping in a chair for years at a time leads to tight calf, hamstring and buttock muscles which in turn lead to slouching further and further back in the chair – which leads to back, neck, shoulder and wrist pain.

Slouch at your own peril.





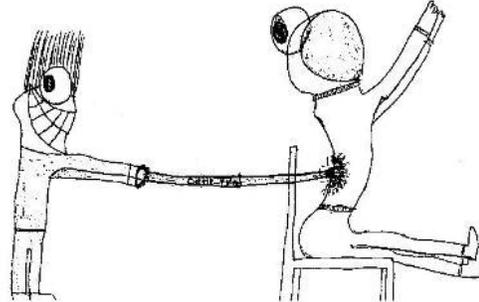
SIT UP STRAIGHT!

Sit up straight! You *have* to, because the ergonomists are yet to design a chair which will stop you from slouching.

The definition of slouching is '*tilting your pelvis back; contorting your spinal column into the 'C' shaped position, ie: taking the natural hollow out of your lumbar spine.*'

As a consequence your head and shoulders are tipped forward.

That's why you get lower back pain, frozen shoulders, a stiff neck and sore wrists.



WHAT'S STOPPING YOU FROM SITTING UP STRAIGHT?

Of course it's not sitting up straight per se that's the problem. The problem is '*What's stopping you from sitting up straight?*'

It's definitely not a lack of *thinking* about sitting up straight. Just *thinking* about sitting up straight won't do much for your back. You can only *think* about sitting up straight for a couple of minutes and then your mind wanders off to think about something else. As soon as you stop *thinking* about sitting up straight you start slouching - unless you're locked in close to your desk.

There are 7 key issues that need to be addressed. (I'm sure there's more but 7 will do for now.)

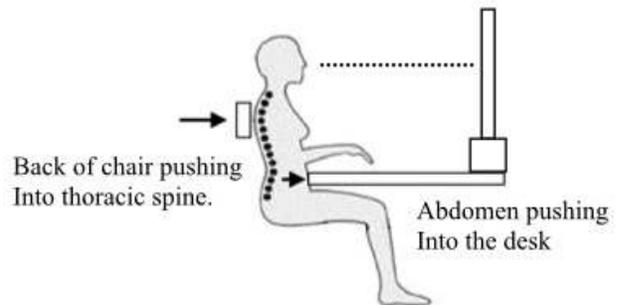
1. You do need a good chair, one that provides good upper back support. There's no doubt about that. It's good upper back support that helps keep the 'S' shaped curve in your lumbar spine, not an extra piece of sponge rubber! (If you're an executive, and you work at your desk a lot, ditch the 'executive' chair and get a good, common or garden typist's chair.)
2. You need a desk that's the right height for you.
3. You need to move your chair in as close to your desk as you can. If your chair is a long way away from your desk, there's a good chance you'll adopt the slouch position. Locking yourself in close to your desk will immediately get you sitting up straight.
4. Over time, the slouch position contributes to a tightening of your calf, hamstring and buttock muscles. When that happens your pelvis tilts backwards. The slouch position becomes even more exaggerated. You've set up the vicious cycle of musculo-skeletal dysfunction
5. Being over weight dramatically reduces flexibility and mobility.
6. Lack of strength to support your torso and head while you work. Your back and abdominal muscles aren't strong enough to support your spinal column. Your neck muscles aren't strong enough to keep your head on the top of your shoulders!
7. Lack of shoulder, arm and grip strength.



HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

- Take the arm rests off your chair so you can get your chair close into your desk.
- Adjust the back rest to an upright position so your thoracic spine is well supported.
- Adjust the height of the desk so your feet are flat on the floor and the top of your thighs are no more than 3cms from the bottom of the desk.
- Push your chair in so your abdomen is pushing in against the desk.
- Adjust the height of your monitor so that when your eyes are look straight ahead they are looking at the middle of the screen.

LOCKED IN AND SITTING UP STRAIGHT



Here are a couple of tips from Tijana Sefic DC, ergonomics for good health.



To get the right seat height, stand in front of the chair and adjust the height of the seat so it is approximately level with your knees.



To gauge whether the seat is the right length, the space between the front edge of the chair and your lower legs is about the size of a clenched fist.



Adjust the back rest so it supports the curve of your back – and press your abdomen into the desk.

STAND UP, STAND UP - for crying out loud

When sitting down's the killer, I don't know why more people don't stand up to work.

Spend as much of your day as you can standing up. If 'they' won't get you an adjustable desk get a box to put your keyboard and mouse on, tilt the monitor back a bit and you're in business.

No-one ever said you have to sit down all day. In the history of the world this is a very recent phenomenon. It's one of the reasons why 30 - 40% of people have crook backs.





SPEND TIME SITTING ON THE FLOOR

If you've got some reading to do, why not read, sitting down on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you. You'll automatically loosen off your hamstrings.



BALANS CHAIR – the sit-up-straight chair

I don't know why more organisations don't recommend this chair to their staff, or why staff don't get one for themselves and bring it in to work.

When you sit on the Balans chair you immediately sit up straight with the 'S' shaped curve in your spinal column.

The reason you sit up straight is that your pelvis and spinal column are no longer impacted upon by the effect of tight calf, hamstring and buttock muscles.



KEEP YOUR BODY STRONG

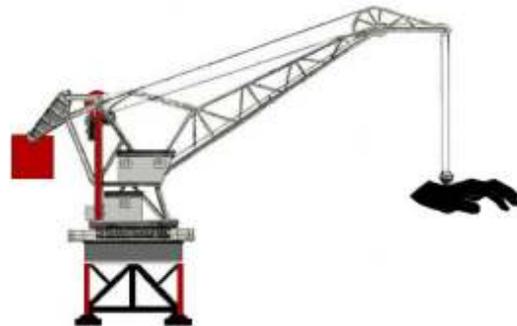
If you've been working all day with your hands out in front of you, of course the muscles supporting them are going to become fatigued.

Unlike the crane you don't have a big counterweight attached to your body to support your arms and hands. All you've got is the muscles in your forearms and shoulders, the muscles of your chest and upper back, the muscles of your lower back and your abdominals and the leg muscles that anchor your body and keep your pelvis in good alignment.

However, when sitting with your hands suspended in front of you all day you're putting your shoulders, arms and wrists under extreme strain.

The upshot is that you are leaving yourself at grave risk of neck, shoulder and wrist pain if you don't have a strength training program.

In fact it would be a nonsense to believe that you could keep your back, neck, shoulders and wrists in good health without a regular and systematic strength and flexibility training program.





STRENGTHEN YOUR CORE MUSCLES

You need to do the core strength exercises on a regular basis.

My definition of core muscles is those muscles that are connected to the pelvis, spinal column and shoulders.

No chair yet devised will protect you from joint and muscle pain if you're not strong enough to hold you body upright while you work.

Sit ups



Press ups



Squats



Superman



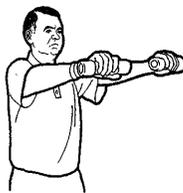
Build up slowly. You'll know you're in good shape when you can do 30 squats, 30 pressups and 30 situps on the trot and do a minute's worth of superman and hang for a minute.

STRENGTHEN YOUR SHOULDERS

One minute arm and shoulder exercise

Select a weight that you can comfortably use. For women start with .5kg in each hand. For men, start with, say 2Kg in each hand and aim to increase the weight to 4 Kg in each hand. The aim is to build the exercise up to 4 sets, of 4 repetitions to the front, 4 to the side and 8 up above your head. It should take about 1 minute to do all 64 repetitions. Gradually build up the amount of weight you use.

Arms to the front



4 repetitions

Arms to the side



4 repetitions

Arms above the head



8 repetitions

Dumbbell overs and unders – back over your head, and down (under) to thighs.

Do three sets, each of 10 repetitions. One repetition is taking the hands back to the floor over your head and down to the floor by your thighs.



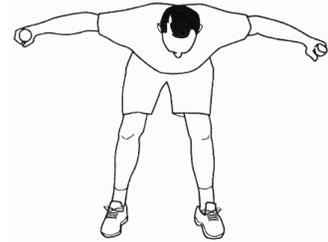
Start with the same weights as for the one minute shoulder exercise. Over time, increase the weights.



Flys – chest and upper back



Strengthens pectoral muscles at the tip of your chest and shoulder muscles.



Strengthens muscles of the upper back and shoulders.

STRENGTHEN YOUR FOREARMS, WRISTS, HANDS AND FINGERS

<p>Forearm curl</p> 	<p>Grip strengthener</p> 	<p>Ball squeeze</p> 	<p>Wrist curl</p> 	<p>Hang</p> 
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Rubber band finger exercise

Hammer exercise

Press forward and back



FLEXIBILITY EXERCISES FOR BACK, SHOULDERS, NECK, WRISTS AND FINGERS

Wall sit

Here's the classic exercise to do to gradually loosen up your calf and hamstring muscles and get you sitting up straighter. Once you've done that the pain in your lower back, neck and shoulders should go away.

With legs straight, bring your toes back toward your chest, tighten your thigh muscles. Sit up straight.

Then lean forward, with shoulders and head back, aiming to take your navel down towards your knees.

Do that 4 times. It'll take about a minute.





Sit up straight

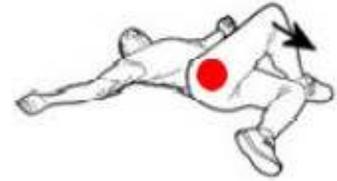
Here's the exercise to loosen up your buttock muscles. Do that and you'll start to sit up straighter. Your back, neck and shoulders will feel better.

If your buttock muscles are really tight you'll fall over when you clasp your hands behind your back.



Hip crossover

You've got to do hip crossover. Build up to 5 minutes each side, over and over again for 40 minutes. Do it in front of TV or while reading a book.

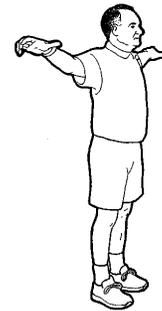


Wall clock



This is a 3-phase exercise. Stand with feet pigeon-toed and touching the wall with thumbs pointing out. Spend a minute each with hands at 12 o'clock, 10/2 o'clock and 9/3 o'clock.

Arm circles



With palms down and thumbs pointing forward, circle arms forward 20 times. Turn palms up, point thumbs back and circle backwards 20 times.

Shoulder blade pinch



Squeeze elbows back to pinch shoulder blades. 20 times.

Elbow squeeze



With knuckles on temples, swing elbows back as far as you can and then to touch at the front. 20 times.

Shoulder stretch



With a partner, one person pulls the arms back to stretch the muscles at the front of the shoulder.



Stand with feet away from the wall, bottom away from the wall and arms flat against the wall.

Slide your body down so thighs are parallel with the floor.

Take your bottom well away from the wall.

In this position you'll be able to place your forearms flat back against the wall.

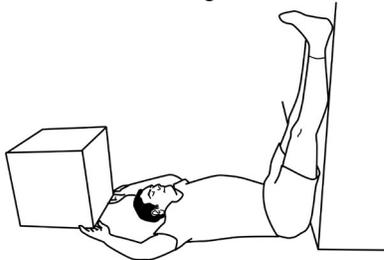
Keeping your forearms flat against the wall, gradually bring your bottom back into the wall, giving your shoulders a good stretch.

You will probably feel the tightness around your shoulders or your lower back.

Stay in that position for a minute. Don't even think of moving your forearms.

Gradually, day by day, week by week you'll loosen off your shoulders.

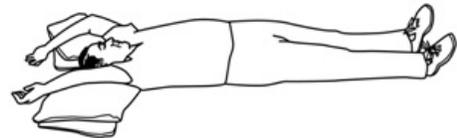
Shoulder stretch with feet against wall



With feet up against the wall, place your arms on the floor as straight as you can get them with the back of your forearm on the floor.

Anchor the fingers under something. Gradually, very gradually, as the shoulders loosen off extend your arms out along the floor. When your arms are straight you'll know you've restored poor function to good.

Shoulder stretch with arms on cushions



If your shoulders are dysfunctional you will not be able to lie on your back with your arms straight, outstretched with forearms flat on the floor.

Rest your elbows on two cushions and let gravity do the work of gradually loosening up your shoulders. As your shoulders loosen up you'll be able to lie with your arms straighter on the floor.

Spend 20 minutes in this position.

PUNCH HARD AND PUNCH OFTEN

Here's a good way to give your trunk, shoulders, arms and hands a good work out.

I reckon that if everyone did 100 punches every day, offices around the world would be wiped clean of sore shoulders, arms and wrists.





CLEAN UP YOUR ACT

They say an empty desk is the sign of an empty mind. On the other hand a cluttered desk is the sign of a cluttered mind. Take your pick.

I see too many desks that are so cluttered there is hardly any space to work.

During your workstation assessment you'll be given great encouragement to take some time out and get rid of all clutter.

At least once a year have a clean up afternoon. File 'stuff' that needs to be files. Throw out 'stuff' that you no longer need.

When you've done that clean up your email files!



WEAR SAFE AND SENSIBLE SHOES

I'd like a quid for every person I've seen sitting at their desk and walking around the office with inappropriate footwear.

In every out manual job there are strict rules about footwear. Steel-capped boots are mandatory.

You wouldn't wear high heels on a building site, so why do you wear them in an office?



Sensible shoes are the order of the day for all office workers. If you're a nurse you are obliged to wear sensible shoes, shoes that won't slip on vinyl floors, shoes that you can wear while you're lifting and hovering over patients, shoes that won't catch on an uneven surface and trip you up.

The same sensible shoe rule applies to all offices. The day isn't all sitting, there's walking around,, going up and down stairs ...

Tight fitting high heels are a safety hazard. They're a health hazard too. This is what the long term effect of inappropriate footwear looks like. It just adds up to more expense to yourself, Medicare and your health insurance fund.



HOLD ONTO THE RAIL

In many organisations it's well nigh a sackable offence not to hold onto a rail while going up or down stairs. You only have to trip once in 10,000 times and you could do yourself a catastrophic injury.

All staff have an obligation to call our colleagues who fail to hold onto rails.





Herophiles

We violate the design sense every minute of every hour of every day. By so doing, the body cannot operate according to design; the functions go into limbo and are never utilized again. This inevitably and inexorably leads to pain.

Pete Egoscue; Pain Free

Do you think Big Pharma is going to tell you that exercising with vigor and eating wisely will cure your crook back, high blood pressure, insomnia, headaches, depression, adult onset diabetes, gout, reflux, constipation or piles? Do you think your doctor is going to write out a detailed exercise, diet and relaxation prescription – and monitor it? Don't ask what your chemist can do for you, ask what you can do for yourself.