



October 2009

SLOUCHING NINE 'TIL FIVE

'Back breaking' work has taken on a whole new meaning with research¹ by The British Chiropractic Association (BCA) revealing that office work is the nation's top 'back breaking' profession.

Despite consistent warnings, 32%² of the British population spends over 10 hours sitting down a day and, for office workers, this often means slouched in unsupportive chairs and hunched over computer keyboards, making it no surprise that 72%³ of Brits have suffered from back pain at some point.

To coincide with Back Care Awareness Week (10th-16th October) The British Chiropractic Association is urging workers, whatever their profession, to straighten up and protect their backs in the work place, in an attempt to prevent the back pain epidemic spiralling out of control.

From nurses standing all day on their feet, drivers spending hours at the wheel and labourers lifting heavy weights, Tim Hutchful from the British Chiropractic Association believes that whatever the profession, education and awareness is key. He comments: "As we spend the majority of our days at our work place it is especially important that we pay attention to our posture and educate people about the harm of not doing so:"

He continues: "Office workers are often at a high risk of postural problems due to the amount of time they spend seated, often in a slouched position. Everyday office tasks such as cradling the phone between the ear and shoulder or the increasingly popular habit to work remotely hunched over a laptop can all contribute to lower back and neck stiffness."

¹ Research conducted by the BCA surveying 39 BCA Chiropractors

² Fieldwork: 7th to 9th March 2006, You Gov. Sample size 2,374

³ Research carried out by One Poll, February 2009, sample of 5,000 adults 16+

To help protect our backs at work, the British Chiropractic Association has offered some useful tips for us to keep in mind at the start of each working week:

- Make time to check your bag/briefcase each day for items you won't need. Additional weight in your bag is extra weight that your shoulders and back have to bare.
- Use a rucksack design laptop case, carry it on both shoulders and adjust the straps so that the bag is held close to your back.
- Take the time to adjust your chair when you start working at a new location.
- Your seat should be adjusted so that your feet are flat on the ground, your hips slightly higher than your knees and your eyes level with the top of the computer screen.
- Relax when sitting into your chair, making sure you have your bottom against the seat back and your shoulder blades are touching the back rest of the chair.
- Arms should be flat and your elbows level with the desk or table you are using. Use a seat with arm rests.
- Take regular breaks. Never sit at the computer for more than 40 minutes; less if possible. When you take a break, walk around and stretch a little.
- If using a laptop, use a stand to bring the screen to eye level. Plugging in a normal keyboard and mouse makes it much easier to use the laptop in a more 'back friendly manner'.
- If using a laptop on the move it is tempting to use it in situations where you have to slump or twist to use it. Try to avoid this.

In addition The BCA has devised a simple three minute exercise routine called Straighten Up UK. This can be incorporated into our daily lives to help strengthen the spine and improve posture. The exercise routine is available to download from www.straightenupuk.org

For more information, call the BCA on 0118 950 5950 or visit www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk where there is also plenty of practical advice to help avoid back problems and improve posture.

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