



Your desk, chair, computer and keyboard – the placement, height and angle of each of these aspects play a crucial role in causing or preventing muscle and eye strain, among other factors. The fatigue that you were attributing to other causes could be stemming from a poorly designed workspace.

So, why does it make sense for organisations to ensure that workspaces conform to ergonomic principles? “Over 60 per cent of individuals diagnosed to have Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) according to RECOUP’s study, had received no training in ergonomics at their offices and another 30 per cent had received incorrect ergonomic advice. Several studies have shown that employees who turn up to work in spite of being in pain cause massive productivity losses amounting to thousands of dollars annually even in small companies. One Scandinavian study showed an annual productivity loss of \$50,000 in a company with just 50 employees,” illustrates Dr Deepak Sharan, consultant in orthopaedics, rehabilitation and ergonomics, RECOUP Neuromusculoskeletal Rehabilitation Centre.



Designed for comfort

ERGONOMICALLY-DESIGNED WORKPLACES CAN GO A LONG WAY IN ENHANCING THE PHYSICAL HEALTH OF EMPLOYEES, WRITES ANKITA SHREERAM

The Hindustan Powerprojects Private Limited office imparts regular ergonomic training to the employees. They

have created 12 employee volunteers who are a part of the ‘train the trainers’ initiative. Today, they act as custodians of their bays and monitor the colleagues’ body postures and advise them on a day-to-day basis. “Companies do not transition to ergonomic office furniture and chairs for cost and convenience reasons. Also, people do not think of an er-

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gonomically-designed peripheral when buying a computer. Till there is a definite government policy on the need for ergonomically-designed environments, we will continue to see sore hands and eye-strain due to improper use of computer peripherals,” says Dr Sriharsha A Achar, chief people officer, Apollo Munich Health Insurance.

Talking about the part that employees can play in ensuring that their workplaces are comfortable, Bharati Jajoo, ergonomic consultant and co-founder, ErgoWorks Inc says, “From an employee perspective, having knowledge and information on what is a safe working position, what are the right ways to relieve fatigue, how the current set-up can be optimised, what simple solutions can be incorporated in day-to-day work and developing safe work practice habits can go a long way in keeping the working professional healthy.” “For a workplace to be ergonomic in nature, one will have to design it in such a way that it perfectly matches the

physical and psychological demands of a job with the capabilities of a worker. Gaining knowledge about the study of interaction between the human bodies and the workplace environment will also help in designing a perfect workplace that outputs better results and benefits,” advises Sriram Manoharan, founder & chief business development officer, Contus.

As experts advise, ergonomics involves several different aspects of the workplace design and all of them must converge to create a stress-free environment.

WHAT IS ERGONOMICS?

It is the applied science of equipment design at the workplace, intended to maximise productivity by reducing operator (read: the employee) fatigue and discomfort. Ailments that a poorly designed workplace can cause, according to Pravesh Talwar, group head administration, Hindustan Powerprojects Private Limited are back aches, spondylitis; carpal tunnel syndrome (pressure on the nerves which pass up the wrist); and musculoskeletal disorders caused by repeated use of the computer keyboards.

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- Find time to indulge in some form of exercise. You can start with a moderate cardio activity like taking the stairs instead of taking the elevator, walking all or a part of the way to work or going for a walk during your coffee or lunch break;
- Basic warm-ups while at work can include neck rotation (look side to side) and shoulder shrugs;
- While sitting, extend the legs, keep your toes pointed and rotate your ankles - clockwise and anti-clockwise;

WORK IT OUT @ WORK

Can't hit the gym? Fret not, as India's leading holistic health guru **Mickey Mehta** discusses with **Yasmin Taj** a few exercises you can do in office

- While sitting on the chair, twist the trunk to one side, hold the arm rest

- and hold the position for 15 to 20 seconds;
- While sitting on the chair, clasp hands behind your head, bend to one side and try and touch the elbow to the arm rest. Hold the position for 15 to 20 seconds and repeat on the other side;
- Holding the back rest of the chair lift the leg onto one side; hold for three seconds; bring it back down and repeat for 12 to 15 counts, then repeat it on the other side;
- Pranayam like anulom-vilom, kapalhati and Om chanting exercises can be done during breaks. These breathing exer-

- cises will help reduce work stress, revitalise the body, bring clarity to the mind and help your mind and body work in harmony to liberate you from worries, tensions and fatigue;
- Place your hand on the side of your face. Push your head against the hand. Make sure the hand is resisting the push. Repeat on the other side and do two sets of 10 reps each.

For illustrated examples by **Mickey Mehta**, log on to www.ItsMyAscent.com yasmin.taj@timesgroup.com

HEALTHY INVENTIONS

VIREN NAIDU PROFILES A FEW FUTURISTIC AND COOL CREATIONS THAT CAN HELP CURB HEALTH PROBLEMS

HEALTH INVENTION: Heart-o-meter
by **Sumeet Chatterjee**,
VP / head of brand, RPG Group:

While we have pace makers in the market, there is no device that monitors the heart rate on-the-go. A heart-o-meter will be useful for heart patients or even a perfectly normal person who walks or jogs or is on his/her

way to work. It will be equipped with an alarm that will buzz much in advance when the heart reaches a critical state. This will give adequate time to reach a hospital and seek medical attention. It will also have a map and using satellite or mobile signals, give options of the nearest hospital and once one chooses his/her option, an SMS will alert a doctor in the chosen hospital.

HEALTH INVENTION: GameBurn
by **Vineet Bajpai**,
group CEO - TBWA India:

As an avid gamer, I often wonder why someone has not invented a first-person action game where the game-character's power levels are directly associated to the pressure exerted by the player on a real cardio machine. We all know games like 'God of War' or 'Call of Duty' need the game-character's power or weapon levels to go up when a monster or formidable enemy attacks. Most games allow the power upgrade to happen by using a weapon chest. Now imagine a gamer

playing this game while he is on a cross-trainer that acts like a game-character power-dynamo! So while the gamer is playing simpler stages, he/she could be on low-exertion mode. As soon as the game-character faces a fight, the only way to raise one's combat-power level or upgrade one's weapon is by actual muscular exertion - more rapid work-out on the cross-trainer. This would make gaming far more real, as the action sequences will involve the players' physical involvement as well (you really sweat when you fight!), and not just a couch-potato approach adopted while working a joystick.

HEALTH INVENTION: Best4U
by **Rohit Malik**, chief sales officer, Mahindra Holidays & Resorts India Ltd:

Best4U will be an electronic chip, which can be attached to a human body and will wirelessly read from a BMI machine. So every morning, when I stand on the BMI machine, this chip will read my height and weight statistics, and calculate my BMI. Based on these readings, the chip will guide me on my

food intake throughout the day - consume a light breakfast of oats; or binge on fries for dinner; you must exercise for 45 minutes today; or keep away from alcohol today! It will be my personal nutritionist, minus the daily fees. This wonder chip will be able to influence my mood and taste buds according to the food that it suggests. Instead of feeling miserable about consuming something which I otherwise hate, this chip will ensure I enjoy it. I can snooze my mood in case I am engaged in some work.

viren.naidu@timesgroup.com



WE ENCOURAGE FEEDBACK FROM OUR READERS. For editorial queries, contact: Editor (Ascent): **Viren Naidu** (viren.naidu@timesgroup.com 022-6635 3679)

TEAM ASCENT: YASMIN TAJ, ANKITA SHREERAM DESIGN: Resp-Art, Mumbai