

# BACK PAIN

## COMPUTERS AND LOW BACK PAIN

### Introduction

Using a computer for a significant period of time can seriously increase the risk of back and joint problems.

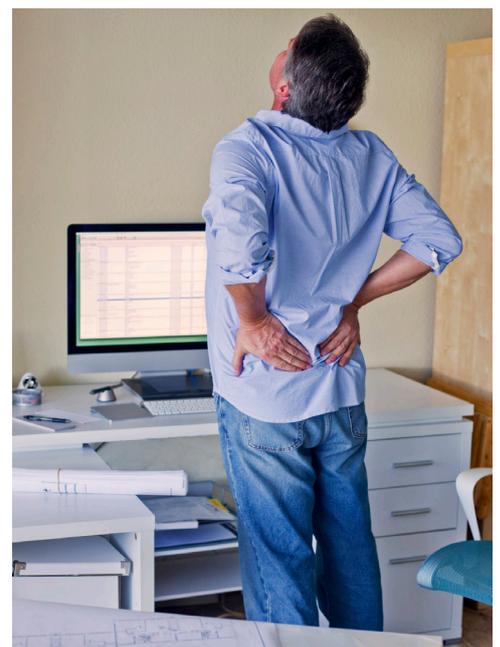
In addition to keeping active and incorporating regular breaks into their day, individuals using computer at work or for long periods of time can benefit from exercises which strengthen and maintain core muscles.

### The right way to sit

- Use an external keyboard, if possible, even with a laptop computer.<sup>1</sup>
- Relax your shoulders.
- Keep your elbows as close to your body as you can.
- Make sure your elbows are resting on your desk in an “L” shape.<sup>2</sup>
- Keep your feet flat on the floor.<sup>2</sup>
- The top of your computer screen should be slightly above eye level.
- Choose an ergonomic chair which provides support for your spinal curves.<sup>3</sup> A fitness ball is not recommended as a substitute for a chair, due to the risk of fatigue and discomfort over the long term.<sup>4</sup>

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## Take regular breaks

Taking a break from the computer helps ensure back health and allows the eyes to rest.

- Try to stand up from your desk or computer at least every hour.
- Stand up, stretch, or take a short walk for a few minutes.
- If you cannot stand up, try changing the position of your hands or shifting your weight in your chair.<sup>1</sup>

## Tablets can also affect back pain

Working with a tablet or e-book can also cause neck and shoulder pain. If you use one of these devices, consider investing in a stand or case that holds the screen upright on a table or desk. Use the tablet with a separate keyboard, allowing you to read without looking down and bending your neck.<sup>1</sup>

### Quick computer stretches

1. Raise your shoulders to your ears.
2. Relax and let your shoulders drop.
3. Slowly move your head, first looking over your left shoulder, then your right shoulder.



## Questions about your diagnosis?

### Unsure which treatment is right for you?

Did you know you have access to a free, independent and confidential decision support service?

Discuss your concerns and have your case reviewed by a specialist in your condition.

The decision is yours. And we're with you all the way.



1. Prevent pain from computer use. Harvard Health Publications website. <http://www.health.harvard.edu/pain/prevent-pain-from-computer-use> Published October 2012. Accessed May 14, 2017.

2. How to sit correctly. NHS Choices website. <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/workplacehealth/Pages/howtositcorrectly.aspx> Reviewed July 22, 2016. Accessed March 2, 2017.

3. Office ergonomics: your how-to guide. Mayo Clinic website. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/office-ergonomics/art-20046169> April 20, 2016. Accessed August 28, 2017

4. For back pain relief, is it better to sit on an ergonomic office chair or a fitness ball? Mayo Clinic website. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/back-pain/expert-answers/back-pain-relief/faq-20057793> September 22, 2015. Accessed August 28, 2017