

STRESS AND STUDY

A certain amount of study stress is good for the performance, but when the level of tolerance is exceeded, your energy will be exhausted.

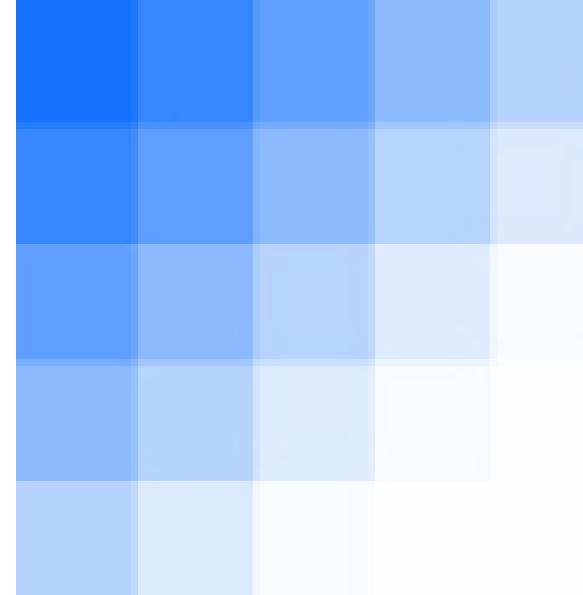
Think of ways of changing your study schedule to better meet your present resources.

Remember to have sufficient rest and take care of your body's recovery.

The skill to relax alleviates pain and prevents muscular tension.

There are many different ways to relax: you can walk in nature, listen to music that you like, be in good company.

An important element of self-care, physical exercise is also a good way of preventing stress.



NECK AND BACK ADVICE



WHAT CAN YOU DO YOURSELF?

In acute neck or back pain, the most crucial thing is pain relief. The treatment can be commenced with paracetamol and local frigotherapy.

It is recommended to carry on with daily tasks, whereas ergonomic factors and factors disposing to strain should be attended. For example, you should avoid sleeping on your stomach.

If the pain gets more severe and lasts longer it is advisable to contact a doctor or physiotherapist.

PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Physical exercise provides easy and inexpensive self-care of neck and back problems. To be effective, the physical exercise must be versatile, regular and taken in correct doses; the type of training or its intensity is not so important.

You can follow the effects of physical exercise on your general condition by measuring your resting heart rate. As your condition improves, the rate becomes lower. Furthermore, physical exercise has its social dimensions: learning, succeeding and doing things together give positive vigour and content to your life.

Health and fitness exercises usually provide a suitable level of strain for patients suffering from mild neck and back symptoms. Health exercise strains the body reasonably, producing health benefits. The recommended amount of exercise is 30 minutes per day. Similarly, daily tasks and activities provide health exercise, for example, walking, going up stairs and cleaning.

Actual fitness exercises are needed when aiming at higher physical performance. Fitness exercise is more effective than health exercise.

Suitable training for a person suffering from neck and back symptoms includes brisk walking and Nordic walking, cycling, swimming and hydrobics, skiing and fitness exercises.

EVERYTHING ALRIGHT AT YOUR COMPUTER DESK?

By answering the following questions you can check the most crucial ergonomic points of your working place:

yes no

1. Are you sitting at the back of the chair with your lower back supported against the backrest?
2. Can you support your feet on the floor or a footrest?
3. If your chair is adjustable: can you adjust it to yourself?
4. Can you support your forearms on the table?
5. Is your elbow near your body when you use the mouse?
(So that you don't need to stretch out your arm for the mouse?)
6. Do you balance out your upper limb loading by working with the mouse with both hands alternatively?
7. Is the display unit either at a lower level or at the same level as the keyboard?
8. Can you adjust the font size or brightness of the display as necessary?
9. Have you seen to it that there is no dazzle or reflection from lamps or windows?
(Test: place a mirror on the display and keyboard and check that no lamp is seen in the mirror!)
10. When working with the computer, do you take a little break - let your eyes rest, stand up etc. - at least once an hour?

Neck and back pain is a common ailment, and there may be many reasons behind it. A large proportion of the neck and back symptoms of students are due to postural faults, while part of them are caused by structural factors or poor muscular fitness.

In many cases the symptoms have a connection with insufficient, too violent or monotonous loading of the muscles as well as the person's habits and usages that he/she is unable to change. Neck and back pain is generally not dangerous; most of the pains disappear by themselves, but tend to recur easily.

Mental strain and stress can increase muscle tension and make the patient more sensitive to feeling pain.

POSTURE

You can prevent neck and back symptoms **YOURSELF** by taking care of your posture, as well as relaxation, ergonomics and having breaks while working.

The most important thing for postural control is to keep the body in central position (fig. 1). Avoid working round-shouldered, with the head pushed forward or in a twisted position (fig. 2).

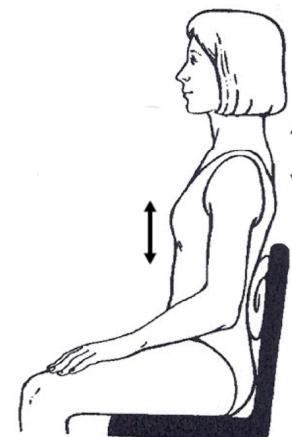


Fig.1

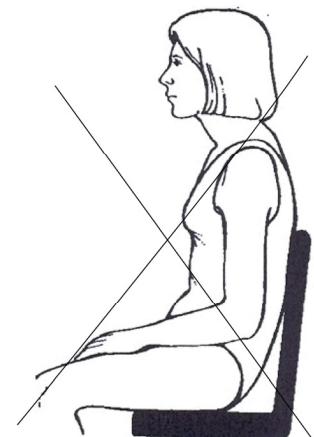


Fig.2

MUSCULAR BALANCE

For maintaining a good posture, mutual balance between the strength and stretchability of the muscles is required. Sedentary work predisposes to muscular unbalance, at which part of the muscles lose their elasticity (= the ones marked with +), while other muscles are tired and weakened (= the ones marked with -). Good muscular strength can be maintained and neck and back symptoms prevented by self-care, that is, by stretching the tense muscles and strengthening the weakened groups of muscles as well as by a variety of mobility exercises.

+ Muscles that tend to tighten up and should be kept elastic by stretching include neck and chest muscles, lower back muscles and hip flexor as well as the muscles on the back of the femur and the peroneal muscles (fig. 3).

- Strength and endurance exercising is useful for easily exhausted muscles that are prone to muscular weakness. These groups of muscles include the following: cervical muscles and the muscles between the shoulder blades, the abdominal and gluteal muscles as well as the muscles on the front side of the thigh (fig. 3).

Tense muscles can also be weak, and consequently, suitable doses of mobility exercise are needed for them.



Fig. 3

ERGONOMICS

Study ergonomics comprises postural control, study methods and equipment.

To reach a balanced position and staying in it can be facilitated by choosing the right kind of furniture. In addition to good ergonomics, it is important to change the position and take breaks in working in the sitting position to prevent loading of the musculoskeletal system.

A laptop is not intended for continuous use, because due to the small size, it does not allow a good ergonomic working position.

When using a laptop, you should aim at as good a working position as possible, see fig. 4.

The longer you work with a computer, the more important it is to sit in the correct position. It has been observed that even two hours of working with a computer per day increases the risk of neck symptoms.



Fig. 4