

E-BOOK

HOW TO
REDUCE BACK PAIN
WHILE HONOURING YOUR
DESK JOB

BY OUR CHIROPRACTORS



Wimbledon
Chiropractic &
Sports Injury Clinic

MOVING IS IN OUR MAKEUP...



As humans, we were **born to MOVE**. We have done so for thousands of years as we were required to walk, run and squat throughout the day in our routine to acquire food and other supplies to live off.

It has only been of late, in the past few hundred years, that we have reduced our physical activity and become more likely to **sit for hours on end** throughout the day. Whether you are driving, working at your desk, or watching tv, you are sitting.

You have probably heard it time and time again, **sitting is killing us!** And yes it is.. It has been associated with increase risk of **chronic diseases** such as **cancer, heart disease and diabetes**, and of course **joint and bone problems** like **neck pain, back pain and osteoporosis**.

But what happens when your job requires you to be desk-bound? You can't exactly throw in the towel.

We have put together this guide to help you create an **optimal workspace** to counter the **negative effects of sitting** for most of the day.

Give our **tips and tricks** a try for **less pain and stiffness** and **overall better health**.



SO WHAT DO WE DO?



If you are like **81% of UK workers**, you spend between **4 and 9 hours a day SITTING!** Now that works out to **67 sedentary days per year** according to a survey by Fellowes.

As mentioned before, if your job requires you to sit, you are probably not going to just **quit and look for greener pastures**. Unless of course, you find a job that you love that doesn't require you to sit for majority of the day. Bonus for you!

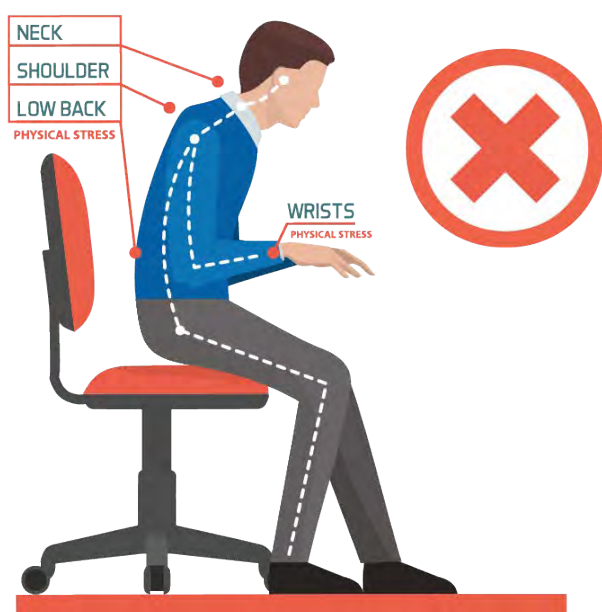
However, did you know that **standing all day** also comes with its own **risks and problems**..Especially for those who have spent most of their lives sitting in front of a screen and as a result have developed **muscle imbalances and joint restrictions**.

The best solution to reducing pain and risk of sitting is to **vary your working posture** throughout the day and **transition to more active postures** as much as you possibly can so that your body can **gradually adapt** and **strengthen**. You also need to ensure your **desk set-up** is focused on ensuring your body is **aligned correctly** to **reduce stress on the body**.



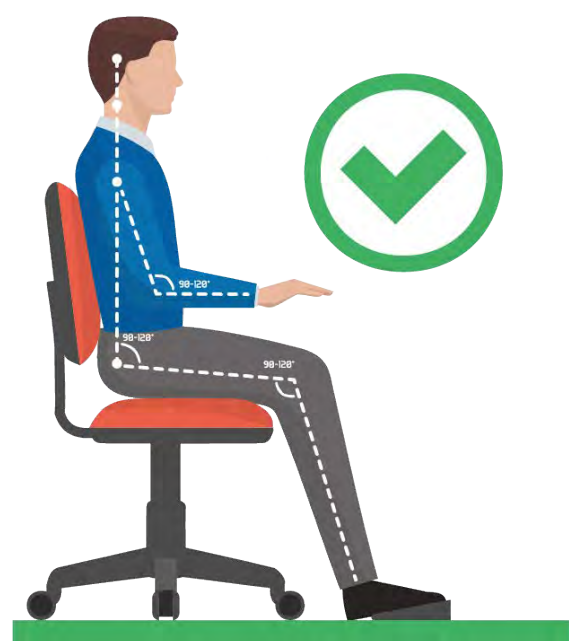
SIT TALL... DON'T SLOUCH

UNHEALTHY



- Head sits anterior to body. Neck muscles support the weight of head and leads to tension in neck muscles.
- Shoulders rounded and chest muscles shortened increases the risk of developing a work related upper limb disorder.
- Lumbar spine slumped and knees above the level of hips. Leads to increased pressure through the lumbar discs and excessive ligament and muscle stretch in lumbar spine.

HEALTHY



- Head is balanced on vertebral column. Neck muscles relaxed.
- Open posture with chest leading and shoulders back creates correct balance between neck, shoulder and upper limb muscles.
- Lumbar spine upright and knees below the level of hips. Increasing the angle between the trunk and the thigh encourages the spine into an upright posture which may reduce and even out disc pressure.

Keep Moving!

Enforced static posture is bad. With office related musculo-skeletal disorders on the increase, it is now widely appreciated that movement has to be introduced into the office scenario. It is often said that...

“the best posture to assume is the next one”

HOW TO KEEP MOVING



Find ways to create movement in the office environment.

- **Take mini breaks regularly – at least hourly.** Use this time to move around, change posture and maybe do some of the exercises.
- **Keep mouse, keyboard and telephone within easy reach.** Alternating between the left and right side may help alleviate tension in the neck and upper limbs.
- **If you have a free float or recline mechanism on your chair, use it to regularly change your position.** This will have the effect of maintaining tone in the trunk muscles, improving circulation, breathing and alertness.
- **If you have an electric height adjustable workstation, use the opportunity to sit, perch or stand whilst continuing with your office work.** If you have a fixed height desk try to stand up whenever possible, e.g. when on the phone, talking to colleagues.

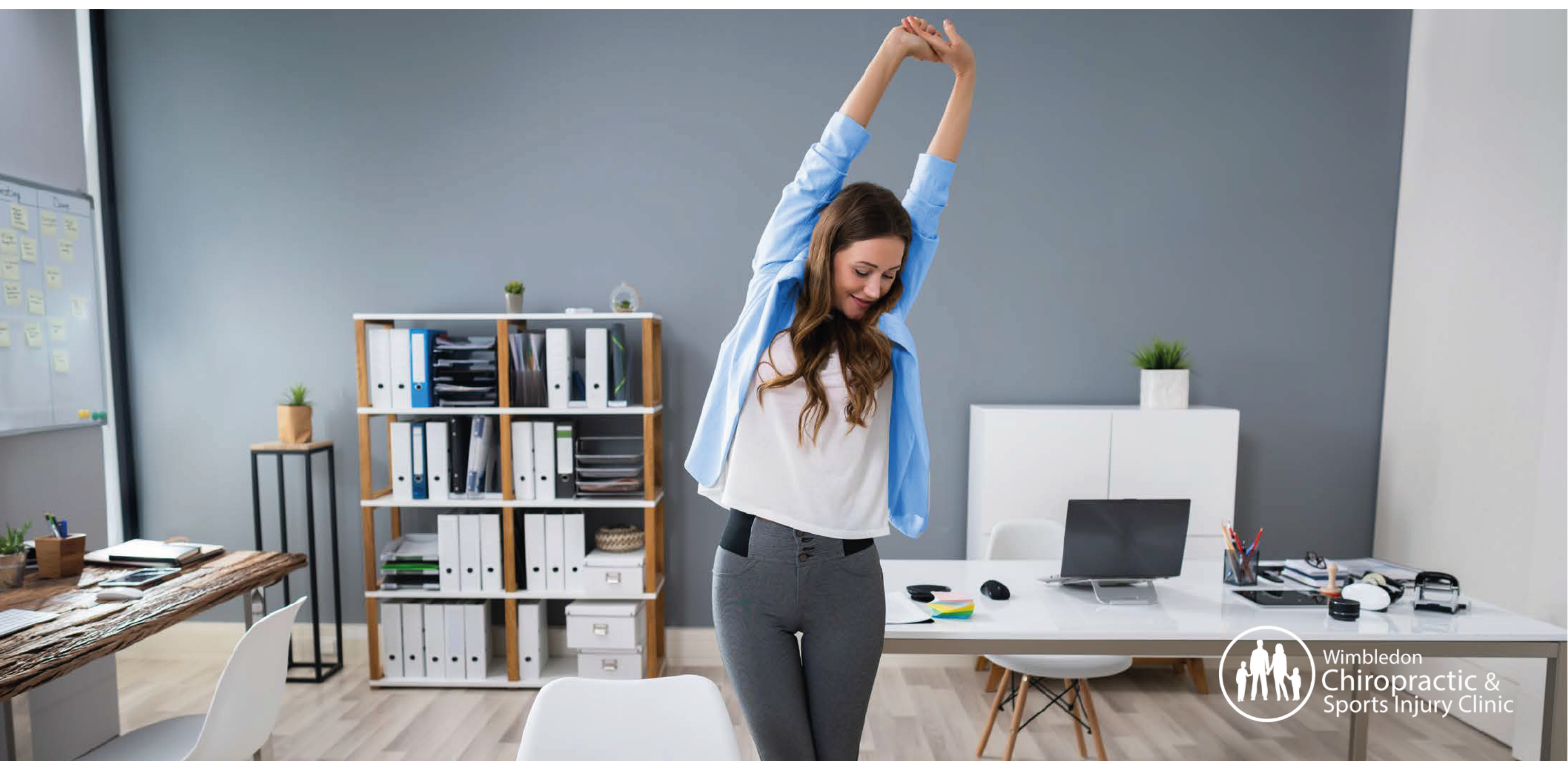


EXERCISE

These exercises will reduce the risk of developing computer-related aches and pains.

If you have a pre-existing medical condition it may be advisable to discuss these exercises with a medical or one of our spinal professionals before starting.

- **Side to Side Turning.** Rotate your head left then right, taking care to keep your eyes on the horizon and aiming your chin at your shoulders. Use your eyes to focus on something in the distance. Repeat 3 times.
- **Chin Tuck.** Sitting tall, imagine you are suspended by a piece of string from the crown of your head. Keeping eyes level with the horizon, tuck your chin in to make a double chin. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 3 times.
- **Forwards Press.** Gently interlock your fingers, palms facing away from you. Press your palms away from your body, gently stretching the forearm muscles, fingers and muscles between the shoulder blades. Hold for 5 seconds.
- **Shoulder Shrug.** Keep your shoulders back and lift them towards your ears, breathing in slowly. Tighten the muscles in your shoulders and hold for 5 seconds. Breathe out as you drop your shoulders. Repeat 3 times.
- **Candles In Wind,** Start with your hands behind your neck, loosely grasp one wrist. Keep head tall, chin tucked and reach as high as you can while pulling in your belly button. Hold for 5 seconds, then lean a tiny bit left, hold and come back to center, and repeat to the right



SETTING UP YOUR WORKSTATION

SETTING UP YOUR CHAIR

Seat Height Adjustment and Footrest

Do not lower your chair to suit your desk height, adjust your desk height if possible. A footrest is to be used if the chair height has to be raised to meet the desk and your feet cannot reach the ground. Your belly button should align with the work surface, while the knees are squared or feet are in-front. the feet don't have to be flat on floor but flat on foot rest yes. Note: You need your toes to be able to reach floor however to have control

Knees Higher Than Hips

Working with the most common type of back pain cause, the back is often too curved. Using a foot stool to slightly elevate the knees opens the back up. If this causes you discomfort its a sign that you need care as the over arching spine has become locked.

Backrest

Two simple words of advice work well here - "use it!" Just like scaffolding around a house takes stress off the walls, in turn, the back rest of the chair takes stress off your back.

Free Float and Reclining Mechanism

Movement prevents the musculo-skeletal system from locking up. Do not lock your chair into one position. Instead recline your chair, if possible, for limited periods i.e. when talking on the phone.

Armrests?

Contrary to popular opinion I think armrests are, in most chair designs, redundant! I have never walked around all day with my arms hanging by my side and said I need to rest my arms. Have you?

The reason is they are hanging and they love to hang.

The arms are also (in most chair designs) too far away from the body.

Using them is more likely to give you shoulder pain as you flare your elbows to reach them.

Use the arms only to raise your body out of the chair and drop/ remove them if you can.

Headrest

Much like the the back rest "use it!" Of course some chairs don't have it but just by bringing your head back to meet a line of where you would expect the head rest to be, you are winning!

SETTING UP YOUR WORKSTATION

SETTING UP YOUR DESK

The Problems

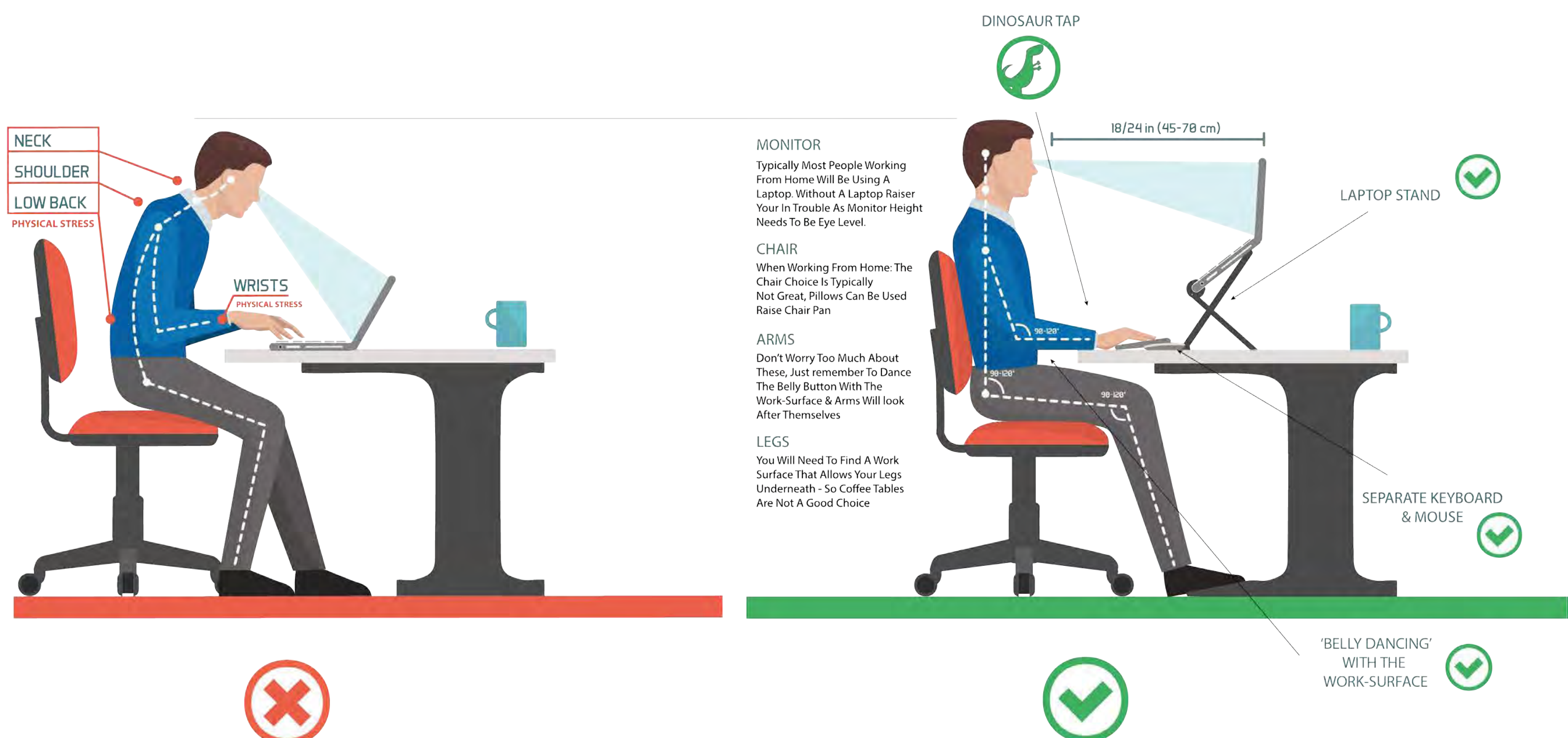
Most office desks are static and fixed at 72-75cm high which may not be the correct height for you when you have set up your chair correctly. A desk height that is too low can cause a 'C' shaped spine and musculo-skeletal pain, A desk that is too high will cause the shoulders to 'shrug' leading to neck tension.

The Solutions

Sit-Stand Desk: Electric height adjustable at the touch of a button. The ideal solution as you can work at the desk in sitting or standing posture. Set-Up desk: Height adjustable by means of a peg or screw system. Desk Raisers/elephants feet: Sit under the desk feet to increase height by 3cm.

Setting Your Desk Height

First set up your chair using the information provided. The middle row of the keyboard should be just below the elbow (forearms very very slightly sloping or parallel with floor, never below desk), Never shrug your shoulders to meet the desk.



SETTING UP YOUR WORKSTATION

SETTING UP YOUR DESKTOP

Monitor

Set the monitor arms length and raised (laptop raiser or monitor arm) ensure, if you need glasses, that you select the right lenses for VDU use.

Keyboard & Mouse

Separate keyboard and separate mouse is essential.

Telephone

Consider a headset or hands-free for all calls, web-chats, zoom, google meets etc

Writing/Reading Slope

Reduces the viewing distance, lessens eye strain and encourages a balanced posture.

Laptop Use

All the above principles apply. If using a Laptop for extended periods, a height adjustable stand and separate keyboard/mouse is recommended. We recommend the Nex-stand, which can be purchased in-clinic for approx. £25.00 (pictured) or the sleeker Roost laptop stand £60-70. Note: Both fold away to the size of tinfoil /cling film roll.



TAKE IT SLOW...



If you have been sitting for years, it will take **time** for your body to **adapt** to the exercises and changes you implement. So make sure to **go slow** and give your body a **chance to adapt**.

Listen to your body and if you ache or develop pain take a break. Or, even better, **take a break** before you ache!

Remember to switch postures every 20 minutes and go for a short walk or take a micro-break every hour to avoid long-term injury and discomfort.

If you would like to set up a call with one of our Chiropractors to walk you through your desk set-up or sensations you're feeling we welcome your call.

You can call today on 02085403389 or email us at info@wimbledonclinic.co.uk

