

## Neck checklist

**Do you get headaches, shoulder pain, or neck pain at work? If you do, here's a short checklist that might help you uncover some of the causes.**

- ❑ **Have you had your eyes checked lately?**  
If your eyesight is not 100% you may be straining not only your eyes, but your neck and shoulders. Problems are not always obvious, so make an appointment for a thorough eye examination.
- ❑ **Do you slouch?**  
When you slouch, your head tilts back to see your work properly. This shortens your neck muscles, wears down the joints in your neck and may even compress the nerves that go to your arms.
- ❑ **Do you have adequate support for your arms and wrists?** Armrests will take the stress off your shoulder muscles which normally carry the weight of your shoulder girdle and arms. Also consider using a wrist support.
- ❑ **Do you hold the phone between your ear and shoulder?**  
One client who spent a whole day on the phone developed a trigger point in his neck that sent pain into his chest. He thought he was having a heart attack! If you spend a lot of time on the telephone, invest in a headset.
- ❑ **Is your work in front of you?**  
If you spend most of your day looking at a computer screen, make sure it's in front of you and not positioned to the side so that you have to turn your head to see it.
- ❑ **Do you use a document holder?** Document holders keep your papers next to your computer screen so that you don't have to twist your neck around trying to look at printed material that's lying flat on the desk.
- ❑ **Do you take frequent breaks?** Take frequent short breaks. It's the best thing you can do to prevent your muscles from tightening up.
- ❑ **Do you carry a heavy briefcase or purse?**  
Change sides frequently. Better yet, centre the weight over both shoulders by using a knapsack.
- ❑ **Is it time for a stress check?**  
If you feel stressed often, you may need to take a serious look at your lifestyle and explore ideas for reducing your stress level.
- ❑ **Do you breathe?**  
If you don't breathe properly your shoulders and neck muscles will tense up. Make a point to take deep breaths at various times during your workday. Breathing through the diaphragm in the upper abdominal region (solar plexis) is the most effective way to take a deep breath.

If you have specific health concerns consult your medical doctor. This information is educational only and is not intended to replace the advice of your personal health care providers.