HEALING
Category : August 1995
Published by Anonymous on Aug. 01, 1995

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Computer Stress Syndrome II

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Last month we considered some of the factors that produce Computer Stress Syndrome and what we can do to eliminate them. Now we will discuss one of the most important causative aspects of this syndrome-posture.

The most critical factor is the realtionship of the head and spine. For healthy and comfortable prolonged work, the head must be in a straight line directly over the pelvis. The lumbar curve can be maintained by using an adjustable chair or a wedged cushion to sit upon. Keep the feet flat on the floor or on a foot rest. They should not be crossed, as this interferes with the circulation. We must not allow ourselves to slump. To help the circulation in the lower extremity, frequent wiggling of the toes is suggested.

The arms hang freely from the shoulders, which are always relaxed, and the forearms are at a 90-95 degree angle to the arms. The wrists are to be at the level of the elbows or slightly below, preferably resting upon an elevated bar so that the fingers may freely move above the keyboard. Adjust the angle of the keyboard as necessary to maintain the proper alignment with the fingers. Thus we see that the level of the keyboard is very important to maintaining good posture. The fingers should be at, or slighly below the level of the wrist, never higher than the wrists. If they are higher, the carpal tunnel syndrome may develop. This is a very painful disease syndrome that we have previously discussed. Printed copy that one is working from should be at eye level and well lit, but the light must not reflect upon the screen. If the copy is positioned alongside the keyboard, then it should be frequently changed from left to right side in order to maintain the balance of posture. It is advisable while working to change one's line of vision periodically by turning the head to the right and left to view other parts of the room. At the same time one may shrug or rotate the shoulders to release built up tension. Also,

twisting and bending at the waist gives the body a chance to relax further and improves circulation. Frequent changes of the line of vision from near and far are advised.

If there is tingling in the hands and wrists, this may mean the wrists are lower than the hands or that there is spasm and increasing tension in the neck from mal-alignment. This can easily be corrected by doing the cervical spine hatha yoga asanasand/or a full body stretch. Also, frequent flicking of the hands and wrists as though one is trying to flip water off them will return the circulation to normal. One of the most helpful procedures to maintaining correct posture during long working periods is conscious deep and rhythmic breathing, with the spine straight and the back supported by the chair or the use of the wedged cushion.

Frequent blinking of the eyes is also helpful as one tends to stare and not blink, which may lead to an altered state of consciousness. Consciously blink your eyes easily but completely every 3-5 seconds. It is advisable to have a special "computer glasses" prescription-even if one does not ordinarily wear glasses. Consultation with a behavioral optometrist or opthamologist is wise for the eyes. The ideal working distance from the monitor is 24 to 28 inches, so glasses focused at this distance are helpful. They may be bi or tri focals if needed. Tinted lenses will help cut down on detrimental and distracting glare.

Part III next month.

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