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5 Signs Your Office Setup Is Causing Back Pain (and When to See a Chiropractor)

Our Friends · Thursday, July 9th, 2026

You don't clock a bad desk setup while it's happening. You clock it at five in the afternoon, when you stand up and your lower back has seized, your neck's stiff, and your shoulders are somewhere up around your ears. Most office jobs mean long hours in a chair, and it's easy to get absorbed in the work without a thought for how you're actually sitting.

It's tempting to blame a big day, but the workstation is often quietly doing the damage. The height of your chair, where your screen sits, or simply staying put too long all add load to your muscles and joints. You won't feel it straight away. Give it a few weeks or months, though, and those aches become a regular fixture.

So here are five signs your office setup might be behind your symptoms, when it's worth considering **back pain treatment**, and how a chiropractor can help.

Most people don't give their desk a second thought until it starts to hurt, but your body is keeping score every day. A chair that doesn't support you, a screen that's too low, a reach that's slightly too far for the keyboard, and your muscles are working harder the whole time you sit. The tell is that it usually starts small, the odd ache at the end of the day, and creeps up until it's most days. If the aches aren't settling, the workstation is the first place I'd look.

Sign 1: Your lower back aches after sitting

This is the one we see most in desk workers, hands down. A few things drive it. Your chair might not be supporting your lower back, your desk could be too high or too low, or you're simply sitting too long without getting up. You might notice stiffness, pain when you stand after sitting, an aching back during or after work, or trouble bending comfortably. If that's you most days, get it checked. Once you know the cause, it's easier to decide whether back pain treatment is the right move.

Sign 2: You keep drifting towards the screen

Ever caught yourself creeping closer to the monitor without realising? It happens constantly, especially on a laptop or when you're deep in something. Over time it loads up the neck, shoulders and upper back, and you start to see a forward head position, rounded shoulders, neck stiffness, tightness across the upper back and the odd headache. A chiropractor can look at your posture, how

your neck and upper back move, and whether the workstation is feeding it, then suggest exercises, treatment and a few desk changes if they're needed.

Sign 3: Your chair isn't holding you up

Add up the hours you spend in that chair. If it isn't supporting your lower back, your body does the extra work to keep you upright, and after a few hours you feel it. Poor sitting posture, pressure through the lower back, muscle tightness, an aching back by knock-off time. Often a few tweaks fix a lot. Your lower back should feel supported, your feet should sit flat on the floor, and the chair height should let you work without reaching up or down to the desk.

Sign 4: Regular neck pain and headaches

Your neck shouldn't be sore every single evening. Hours spent looking up or down at a screen, or a workstation that isn't set up well, and the neck and shoulders cop it. Neck stiffness, headaches, shoulder pain, tight muscles, trouble turning your head comfortably. A chiropractor can assess your neck, posture and movement to see whether they're driving the symptoms, and suggest workstation changes alongside the treatment that suits you.

Sign 5: Rest isn't touching it

A bit sore after a big day is normal, and a decent sleep or a break from the desk usually sorts it. What's worth acting on is pain that keeps coming back, hangs around for weeks, or starts making everyday things hard. Pain that returns most days, wakes you at night, has lasted several weeks, or just isn't shifting with rest is your cue to get it looked at rather than wait it out.

How a chiropractor can help

If the desk is feeding your symptoms, step one is working out where the strain is coming from. Everyone sits, works and hurts a little differently, so a chiropractor starts by understanding your situation before recommending anything. A full assessment might take in how you sit, your posture, how your neck and back move, your strength and flexibility, and your workstation and daily routine. From there, if it's appropriate, gentle adjustments can help free up stiff joints, soft tissue work can ease the tightness that builds through the neck, shoulders, back and hips, and a few simple home exercises for the core, upper back, shoulders, hips and neck can support the rest. Expect some ergonomic tweaks too, like adjusting the chair, moving the screen, repositioning the keyboard and mouse, supporting the lower back, and building in regular breaks to stand and move.

When it's more than just the desk

Sometimes the workstation is only part of the story. Old injuries, other health conditions, stress that has you holding tension in your shoulders, and life outside work all feed into how your back and neck feel. That's exactly why a decent assessment looks at the whole picture, your work, your movement, your history and your daily routine, rather than blaming the chair and leaving it there. If your symptoms aren't adding up to a simple desk problem, it's worth getting a proper look rather than guessing.

When it's sudden and severe

Back and neck pain can also come on fast, after lifting something heavy, an awkward bend, or a

sudden movement, and sometimes it's bad enough to make walking or turning your head difficult. An **emergency chiropractor** may be able to assess things like severe lower back pain, a neck that's stuck, muscle spasms, or pain after heavy lifting, and many clinics keep same-day spots for exactly this.

Some symptoms, though, need a hospital, not a chiropractor. Get emergency medical help straight away if you have any of these:

- Loss of bladder or bowel control
- A serious injury after a fall or car accident
- A high fever alongside severe back pain
- Weakness or numbness that's getting worse
- A suspected broken bone

A quick guide to setting up your workstation

If you only fix one thing, make it the setup, because it's working for or against you every hour you sit. Start with the chair. Set the height so your feet rest flat on the floor and your knees sit around hip height, and use the back support so your lower back isn't left to fend for itself. Bring the chair close enough to the desk that you're not leaning forward to reach. Next, the screen. The top of it wants to sit around eye level, about an arm's length away, so you're looking straight ahead instead of down. If you're on a laptop, prop it up and add a separate keyboard and mouse, otherwise you're stuck choosing between a sore neck and sore wrists. Finally, the keyboard and mouse should sit close enough that your elbows stay near your body and your shoulders can relax. It takes ten minutes to sort and it heads off a surprising amount of trouble.

Heading off office back pain

If you're at a desk most days, a few habits keep sitting comfortable, and they stick more easily once they're routine. Get up every 30 to 60 minutes, stretch through the day, keep your feet flat and your monitor at eye level, support your lower back, resist the slouch, do a bit to strengthen your core, take phone calls on your feet, and stay active outside work. None of it is heavy lifting. It just adds up.

What you can do this week

You don't have to overhaul everything to feel a difference. Pick two or three changes and actually stick to them. Set a quiet reminder to get up every half hour. Spend ten minutes getting your chair and screen right. Take your phone calls standing. Do a couple of gentle stretches mid-morning and mid-afternoon, and add a short walk at lunch. None of these is heroic, but consistency is what moves the needle, and a handful of small habits repeated every day beats a big effort you can't keep up.

When to look for a chiropractor near you

Back pain, neck pain, headaches and stiffness all make the day harder than it needs to be. If your symptoms keep coming back, or work, driving and exercise are getting more difficult, it's time to have them assessed. If you're searching for a chiropractor near you or a **chiropractor in Melbourne**, pick someone who takes the time to understand your symptoms, your work and your routine before recommending anything. A thorough assessment helps pin down what's contributing

and whether chiropractic care is appropriate for you.

FAQ

Can sitting all day cause back pain? Yes. Long spells of sitting load the spine and can lead to muscle tightness, slipping posture and lower back pain.

Can a chiropractor help with back pain from desk work? Chiropractors assess spinal movement, posture and joint function, and may build a plan that includes adjustments, exercises and ergonomic advice suited to you.

When should I start looking for a chiropractor nearby? If the pain lasts more than a few days, keeps coming and going, or starts interfering with work or daily life, it's worth getting it checked.

When should I see an emergency chiropractor? For back pain, sudden neck stiffness or severe muscle spasms without serious warning signs, an emergency chiropractor may be able to see you the same day. If you have major trauma, loss of bladder or bowel control, a fever with back pain, or worsening weakness, seek emergency medical attention immediately.

Before you write it off as a busy week

Long hours at a desk change how your neck, shoulders and back feel, especially in the same position day after day. Spotting the early signs and tweaking your workstation goes a long way. If the symptoms keep returning or start getting in the way, have them assessed. Whether you're after back pain treatment, hunting for a chiropractor near you, or looking for a chiropractor in Melbourne, an assessment helps you understand what's driving it and what your options are.

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