

## awareness at work

Yoga is a powerful tool for combating repetitive stress injuries on the job.

Texting: thumb. Mouse: elbow. Guitar Hero: wrist. Modern repetitive stress injuries go by more colorful names than classic ailments like carpal

tunnel syndrome, but the mechanics behind these often-debilitating problems are the same. Performing a repetitive movement like clicking a mouse can cause microscopic tears in tendons, muscles, and other soft tissues. Without adequate time to rest and repair themselves, these tears can become inflamed, and the gradual accumulation of such microtraumas can lead to the ailment known as repetitive stress injury. A single mouse-click isn't stressful, but clicking a mouse for hours—particularly when you're sitting with poor posture—can result in the pain, tingling, and numbness characteristic of a repetitive stress injury.

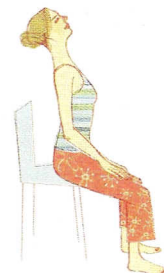
Yoga can be a powerful tool for preventing and relieving these kinds of injuries. A regular asana practice cultivates the strength and suppleness your body needs to work at a computer all day. Yoga's emphasis on proper alignment is also important, because sitting with good posture allows for more freedom of movement and reduces the strain on muscles and joints. And as a practice in awareness, yoga teaches you to be present in your body so that you're more likely to pay attention to early signals of discomfort. Bring this yogic awareness into the workplace by paying attention to your body as you perform daily tasks. You might find that your habits—hunching over the phone, for example, or tensing your shoulders and face—are contributing to your symptoms. Learning to recognize and break these habitual patterns can bring relief, as can taking regular breaks to do these simple postures at your desk. CAROL KRUCOFF

## stretch it out

These poses are adapted from *Healing Yoga for Neck & Shoulder Pain*, by Carol Krucoff.

### 1 SEATED BACKBEND

Sit tall in your chair, feet flat on the floor. On an exhalation, press your palms into your thighs and your sitting bones into the chair as you lift the center of your chest toward the ceiling, keeping your neck long. Inhale back to the starting position. Repeat 3 to 5 times, moving with the breath.



### 2 HUGGING ARMS

Inhale and extend your arms at shoulder height, relaxing the shoulders down. Exhale and hug yourself with the right arm on top, dropping your chin to your chest and lifting your chest to meet your chin. Inhale and extend your arms. Repeat 3 to 5 times, alternating which arm is on top.



### 3 GOMUKHASANA (Cow Face Pose), variation

Keep a scarf at your desk to hold between your hands if they don't comfortably clasp in this pose. Hold for 3 to 5 slow, deep breaths, then repeat on the other side.



### 4 ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA (Downward-Facing Dog Pose), modified

Stand with your hands on your desk or the back of your chair. Fan out your fingers and press down evenly with both palms. Walk your feet back until your upper body forms a right angle with your lower body. Inhale deeply, then exhale and extend your hips back, lengthening your spine.

