

## NECK, SHOULDER & LOWER BACK TENSION

### Tight neck and shoulders? Lower back tension?

Sitting for long hours in front of the computer causes many problems, which you are probably already aware of. But what is considered "long"? Take a 20-year-old and a 40-year-old. Both sit at the desk for 8 hours with short breaks (drinks, toilet, etc.) in between. The 20-year-old does just fine but over time, problems start to surface for the 40-year-old.

Why does this happen? Our body stops its "growth" between the ages of 21 and 25, depending on the different tissues and regions. Post 25, we are basically "drawing on our body savings". The medications and drugs, alcohol, smoking, processed foods, lack of sleep, rhythm of lifestyle and stress all contribute to physical damage to our bodies.

In this article, we are going to talk about tight neck and shoulders and their association with lower back tension. Most people who spend long hours at the desk in a "computer posture" have rounded upper backs (hunchbacks) and tight thoracic spines. Depending on the individual, some will end up with tight necks and shoulders and/or lower back pain.

If you notice that neck, shoulder and lower back stretching does nothing for your pain, you are missing something – you need to apply the golden rules of **RELEASE**, **STRETCH** and **STRENGTHEN**.



#### By Bok Sun, Personal Trainer

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## RELEASE

**1** Lying supine with knees bent, place a peanut ball\* under your upper spine (upper trapezius). The gap of the ball should be under your spine and the two sides of the ball should press against both sides of your spine. Remain in this position for 12 seconds, inhaling and exhaling deeply.

**Muscles released: Upper trapezius**

*\*You'll see these red-colored peanut balls at the stretching corner in the Gym. Alternatively, attach two tennis balls together to form a "peanut" ball.*

**2** Move the peanut ball a little lower to the area between your shoulder blades and remain in this position for 12 seconds, inhaling and exhaling deeply.

**Muscles released: Mid trapezius and Rhomboid**

**3** Move the peanut ball further down and hold for another 12 seconds, taking deep breaths. The feeling will be akin to a deep tissue massage.

**Muscles released: Mid trapezius, Rhomboid and Latissimus dorsi**

**4** Repeat steps 1 to 3 once more.

*Note: Do not hold the positions for more than 15 seconds.*

## STRETCH

### Neck

Using your right hand, pull your head towards the right and hold for 20 seconds. Tucking your chin in, pull your head diagonally towards the front. Repeat on the other side.

### Shoulders

With your left hand across the front of your chest and parallel to the ground, use your right hand to pull your elbow towards the opposite shoulder. Hold for 20 to 40 seconds. Repeat on the other side.

## STRENGTHEN

### Exercises

- ROTATOR CUFF EXERCISE
- CHEST PRESS
- PLANK
- SHOULDER PRESS
- LAT PULLDOWN
- UPRIGHT ROW
- DEAD ROW



### Other Tips

- On average, you should aim to stand up and do some head, shoulder and hip rotation every 60 minutes.
- Check your posture. Besides a hunched back, is your head misaligned towards the front and not staying where it should? This 'turtle neck' syndrome naturally causes problems since the weight of your head (which is almost 4 to 5kg) cannot be supported properly by the cervical spine.
- If you aren't sure how to do a posture check or thoracic spine release, our Gym doors are always open and trainers will be on hand to assist you.
- Once you release your thoracic tightness the range of motion of your neck and shoulders will improve; the tension in your lower back will also be reduced.