Reduce Neck & Shoulder Stress At Work

Your employment requires that you work at least 30 hours per week at your desk. When you first started your employment, you were able to focus on your work with no distractions. Your work was efficient and noteworthy. A couple of years into your occupation you noticed that toward the end of your work day your shoulders and the area of your upper back that is between your shoulder blades get tense. As time passes on that tenseness increases to burning. But, you figure that it is no "big deal", because within an hour of leaving work it goes away.

As the months go by the problem becomes more and more annoying. The burning and tension that once waited until the latter part of your day to appear, now presents itself at the start of your day. Sometimes you feel like there is a "knot" in your shoulders or between your shoulder blades that you can't get to. You call on your co-workers to try to "work the knot out". Each one tries thinking that they have the magic touch and can do better than the last. All try and all have no success.

The pain spreads up to your neck also and sometimes it even leads to headaches. The keeps you from getting a "good nights sleep". It seems that the "no big deal" has transformed itself into a "Huge Deal". Your work performance is suffers, because you spend more time thinking about your pain instead of your tasks.

If all or some of these symptoms sound similar to yours, then you may be suffering from overuse or repetitive stress injuries of the muscles your neck and upper back, including the trapezius, rhomboideus, levator scapula, splenius, and others. These muscles have attachments in the upper back (thoracic spine), scapula (shoulder blade), neck (cervical spine), and head.

A couple of changes can help to alleviate your symptoms. Pay attention to the position of your head when you are working. When you are at your workstation, ask yourself: "Is my head tilted backward, or is my chin jutted forward, or are my shoulders rounded?" When your head is tilted backward, or you chin is jutted forward, the muscles that extend your neck are activated, and your deep neck flexors (longus colli and longus capitus) are deactivated. As a result, your neck flexors become deconditioned, and that can create a muscle imbalance. Rounding your shoulders causes your chest muscles to become tight and shortened, which in turn puts undue stress on you rhomboideus and trapezius muscles. Your chin should be pointed straight ahead and your shoulder should be in line with your ears. This posture reduces the amount of pressure on your cervical spine. At first, it may be difficult for you to keep your chin retracted, because these are muscles that you never consciously used before. Over time, like any other group of muscles, they will increase in strength and endurance and you will be able to hold this position with no problem. To learn how to set up your workstation and see other exercises that can help follow this link: http://www.drphelts.com/injury41.html

Take a few breaks during your day and pull you shoulders back with your arms straights and held out to the side with your palms up and retract (tuck in and down) your chin for two

minutes 3-5 times a day. This trains and strengthens your neck flexors, rhomboideus,and trapezius muscles, while allowing your neck extensors and chest muscles to relax, thereby reducing the amount of overuse of these muscles.

You should also pay attention to the position of your chin during other activities, such as working, watching TV, or even sleeping. You should ask yourself: Is my chin pointed pointed straight ahead? Are my shoulders in line with my ears?

Treatment for the condition at Phelts Chiropractic may include: Ultrasound which produces deep heat in muscles to increase blood flow and relax muscles. Electric Stimulation (reduces pain symptoms), Orthopedic Gua-Sha (stimulates the body to produce more repair tissues). Post Facilitated Stretch (restores muscle flexibility joint range of motion), and Chiropractic Adjustments (restores proper joint alignment).

This article is not meant to diagnose or treat any medical condition. If you are experiencing symptoms, you should contact a healthcare professional for a proper evaluation.
Dr. John Phelts, D.C. (www.drphelts.com)