



Office work can really harm you

Better workstations and posture are not delivering the anticipated benefits as computer-bound office workers creak under the strain of escalating workloads.

A new study has found even good posture and ergonomic office equipment do not prevent back, neck, wrist and shoulder injuries and are failing to protect overburdened sedentary workers from a raised risk of heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

Researchers from the University of Sydney blamed the overall workplace environment for the poor health of office workers. Their survey of nearly 1,000 Australian workers across six government departments found about 85 per cent of people who spent more than eight hours a day working at a computer experienced neck pain. The study, published in the journal *Work*, also found three quarters reported shoulder pain and 70 per cent reported lower back pain.

Lead author Karin Griffiths commented: 'I know the amount of money organisations are putting into improved workstations and ergonomics, and it's not that those changes aren't important.' But she added: 'The problem is nearly everything can be done at the desk now - communication, library research, file retrieval, even meetings. It doesn't matter how good the chair is, it is not going to address the health problem of what some researchers are calling 'chair disease'.' Long hours of computer work may also contribute to cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity, she said.

