

# Are you sitting on a **right chair?**

OUR BUREAU

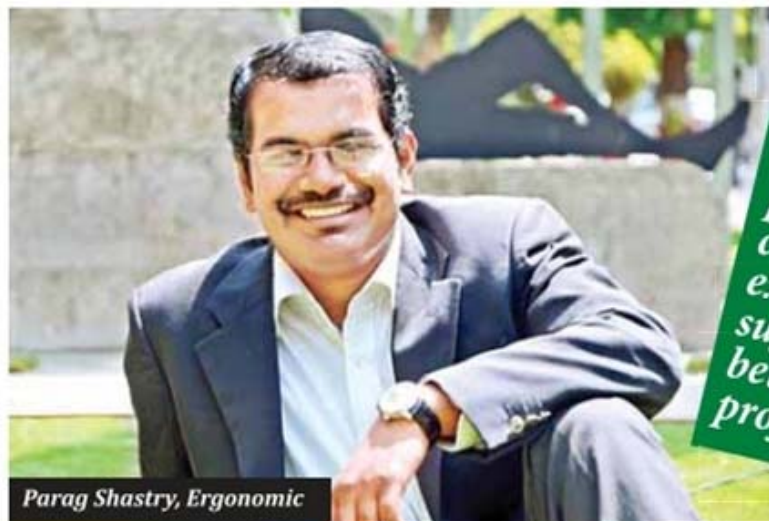
**N**o matter if you are a professional or a student; to sit before the computer screen for long hours is a common practice. Long working hours and stress lev-

healthy professional life is important to perform better.

"You could meet death even while driving the world's safest car if you do not know how to drive safely. Similarly, the best designed office furniture would be misused if

about the requirement of the employees and co-ordinate with the furniture designers to match the criteria.

"You would not be able to get rid of MSD problems like back pain,



Parag Shastry, Ergonomic

*From our regular muscular discomfort to serious back problems, lack of right body posture at work place is the major cause; Ergonomic expert Parag Shastry suggests how to get a better healthy professional life*

els affect our body with Muscular Skeletal Disorders (MSD's). It brings a negative impact in productivity which in turn will affect the growth of an organisation. A

it does not match the employee's requirement," says Parag Shastry, Chief Ergonomic Expert from Godrej Interio. As an Ergonomic he consults with the management

neck and shoulder pain and eye problems if you are not aware of the root cause of it," he explained. In a recent study, it has been revealed that approximately 71% of IT and



Sitting in this position stresses shoulder muscle

ITES employees have been hit badly by discomfort due to bad posture.

According to Parag, it has been proved that furniture sometimes dominates our sitting posture and it is important to choose the correct chair and accessories at work place. "We often tend to bend forward while working in front of the computer screen. It causes lower back pain. At the same time we hang our elbow in the air while typing. That is when we are stressing out our shoulder muscle. It is important to keep your spine straight while sitting. So it is suggested for men to remove their wallet while sitting, as this creates an imbalance in sitting position."

"Choose the right chair that helps you position your back properly and put your elbow on the handle of the chair. Train your mind not to bend towards the computer while working, rather tilt the screen according to your convenience. But do not stress your neck," he adds.

Wrong positioning of foot also creates an obstruction in normal blood circulation. To increase blood circulation in the legs, it is important to stretch the legs in between work and not sit at a place for 5-6 hours at a stretch. "Take small breaks and walk. I know we are facing huge work pressure. But drink a lot of water and your body will automatically drive you towards the wash room," he smiles.



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## Watch your BACK

**As offices graduate from paperwork to computers, CRT screens to flat screens, desktops to laptops, and from thereon to notebooks and tablets, they keep throwing newer challenges to the posture and spine. If not tackled early, they could result in chronic neck, shoulder and lower back problems, says PARAG A. SHASTRY**

If you are relaxed, assuming that your chair has solved your posture-related problems, perhaps it is time you took a re-look at the posture, spine and the chair. Parag A. Shastry, chief ergonomist with Godrej Interio, cautions that not all is well with either of these three if it is a sedentary job, and if the office is constantly upgrading electronically, but not ergonomically.

As offices are graduating from paperwork to computers, CRT screens to flat screens, desktops to laptops, and from thereon to notebooks and tablets, they keep throwing newer challenges to the posture and spine, and if not tackled early, they could result in chronic neck, shoulder and lower back-related problems, Mr. Shastry affirms.

"Out of the 29 chief executive officers I worked with, 12 went back to their laptops after being informed about the perils of using a Tablet. People adapt to technology without thinking much about the consequences. I advise strictly against making the Tablet a primary tool to work on. One can make a desktop a primary tool, and use tablet when on the move," he says.

Those using a Tablet upright on a stand are better off than others who have to constantly keep their head bent to work on the gadget laid down.

A research carried out at the Harvard School of Public Health has revealed that Tablet users' heads and necks were in more strained positions than of the users of desktops or notebooks, which eventually resulted in neck and back pains.

In another study carried out as part of the Wellness@Work initiative by Godrej Interio, the employees were found sitting on the edge of the chair to be able to reach their workstation, hardly ever resting their back against their ergonomically designed chairs. The worksta-



tions were either flat-screen monitors or laptops with visibility compromised. Though they have the option of magnifying the screen for better visibility, the employees rather chose to move forward in their chairs.

"When the spine is kept straight without support for a long time, obviously, the most strained part would be the lower back. No wonder then that most of the employees suffered from lumbar pain," Mr. Sharma says.

One more habit that results in pain is the positioning of legs knee down. Most prefer keeping their feet tucked beneath the chair, resulting in constrained blood supply downwards. This too will result in leg and lower back pain eventually.

However, keeping legs straight gets at odds with maintaining eye-level with the monitor, especially when using a laptop or smaller device. As one lowers the chair's height, one feels the need to bend the legs behind.

### POINTS TO PONDER

- ▶ Ever heard of 'Blackberry Prayer'? It is the collective bowing of business executives in a boardroom meeting when frantically typing on the 'QWERTY' keypad of their Blackberry mobiles. According to Mr. Parag Sharma, there have been instances when people were advised rest after they developed serious complications due to continuous 'Blackberry Prayer'.

- ▶ Godrej Interio, as part of its Wellness@Work initiative, works with offices and employees to bring awareness about right kind of furniture and right posture, and to warn of the Muscular Skeletal Disorders due to bad work positions. Its ergonomic cell offers a three-fold plan which includes Ergonomic Audit, Ergonomics and Wellness Workshops, and Wellness tips

- delivered through mail every week. Launched three years ago, the initiative covered Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai and Delhi, before setting foot in Hyderabad recently.

- ▶ Do you know that designing a car takes one year, but designing a chair takes three? Well, it is true, Mr. Sharma asserts, and says, ergonomically speaking, car seats are of the poorest quality!

Neck bent while on work and improper monitor height are the possible causes of neck, shoulder and low back pain, Mr. Sharma says. Monitors kept at oblique angles vis-à-vis the keyboard, typing with no elbow support, and mouse kept at a different level than the keyboard are all instances of ergonomically uninformed work positions resulting in posture problems, great discomfort,

Disorders. Mr. Sharma traces the whole problem down to archaic office furniture not keeping pace with the technological upgrade at the work place.

A chair should ideally have pneumatic seat height adjustment, with adjustable lumbar and armrest, he advises, and claims that an ergonomically improved office integrating the furniture used with the primary working tool (computer) will

overall productivity.

Cluttering on one's desk and around the work place, too, should be avoided as it causes stress and reduces the maneuverability of hands.

"On any day when I'm not moving around, I always prefer to work on a desktop. It gives larger space for the hands to move around, and does not compel me to bring my self-crouching before the commut-