Reduce Stress!

◆ Take a break every hour. Do some relaxation or stretching exercises or talk with someone about topics unrelated to work. Give your body and mind a rest.

◆ Massage your hands and forearms several times a day with a vitamin E lotion. The massage will improve circulation and break up adhesions. Since you can't touch a keyboard until the lotion is absorbed, it also enforces a good break.

◆ Massage the muscles in your neck working your way down from the skull to the shoulders, applying more force to the larger muscles as you go down.

◆ Periodically evaluate your environment for ways to reduce stress. Try to keep your desk uncluttered so you can always find things. Make sure programs are set up correctly on the computer, and see if you can use a macro program to reduce keystrokes.

◆ When faced with unavoidable stress, step back and evaluate your reactions. You can't eliminate stress in life, but you can modify your reactions so they don't harm you.

Ergonomics

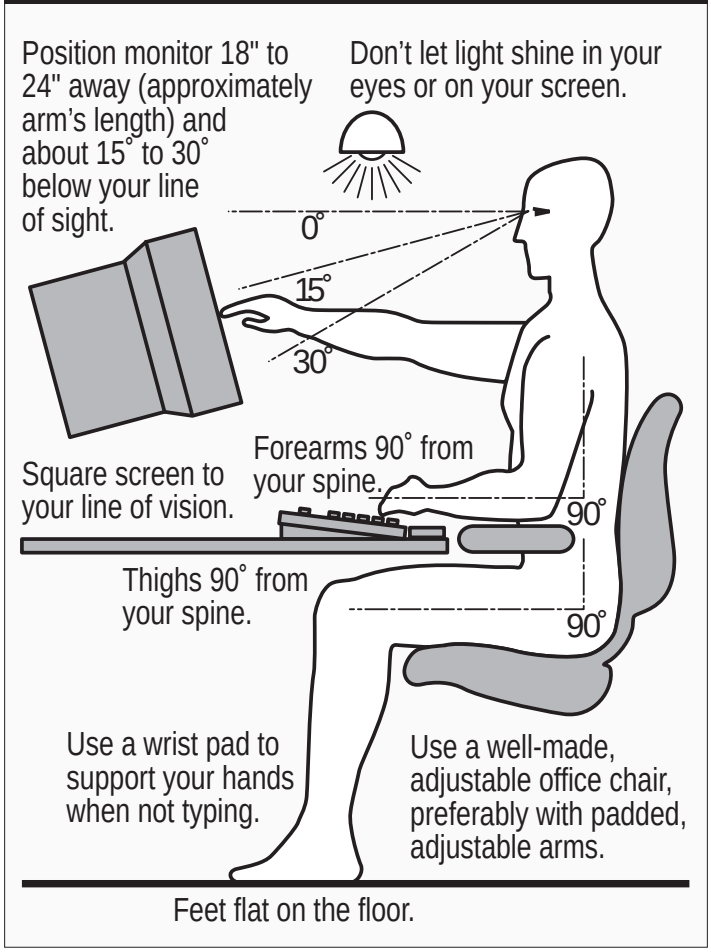
◆ Watch your posture. Your feet should sit flat on the floor, your upper and lower legs should bend at the knee at a right angle, your back should be slightly arched and your neck straight, and your upper and lower arms should also be at right angles. Keep your wrists straight, with the fingers dangling down comfortably.

◆ Do not crane your head and shoulders forward to look at the computer screen—your neck isn't designed to hold the weight.

◆ Use a keyboard wrist rest properly. Your wrists should not be bent or touch the pad while you type. Rest your wrists on the pad only when not typing.

◆ Drink plenty of water regularly during the day. An inexpensive bike water bottle will help keep water at your desk without chance of spills. Experts recommend six to eight glasses of water daily. Juice and soda are not substitutes for pure water, which makes up approximately 65% of our bodies.

Create a Healthy Working Environment



Exercises

◆ Get a soft foam ball, hold it in your hand, and with your palm turned up gently squeeze ten to fifteen times. Do this several times a day with each hand.

◆ Stretch your fingers apart, trying to make your hand as big as possible. Hold the stretch for a few seconds, then curl your fingers inward without clenching. Keep your fingers curled for a few seconds before repeating.

◆ Periodically drop your hands to your sides and shake them gently as though you were trying to shake off drops of water. This helps restore circulation and reduce carpal tunnel compression.

◆ Oxygen is good stuff—breathe more. Yawning regularly (a reflex action when the body needs more oxygen) is a good way to provide more air to the brain and help calm you. Alternately, try this breathing exercise every half hour. Feel your belly bulge out as you breathe in slowly and deeply; feel your stomach suck in as you breathe out, trying to exhale smoothly and as long as possible.

◆ Periodically stretch your neck. Concentrate on your breathing and the way your muscles move (or don't move) while you do this stretch. Exhale slowly and lower your chin to your chest. Inhale deeply and raise your chin. Exhale and move your head back toward your spine as far as it wants to go. Inhale and raise your head. Use the same breathing pattern to drop your left ear toward your left shoulder and then your right ear to your right shoulder. The concentration and breathing are also relaxing.

◆ Rest your eyes by periodically focussing on distant objects. If that's not possible, at least regularly look away from your screen. Blink often to keep your eyes moist. Exercise your eye muscles by tracing an X in a box; look as far to the sides as possible. Reduced eye fatigue reduces stress.

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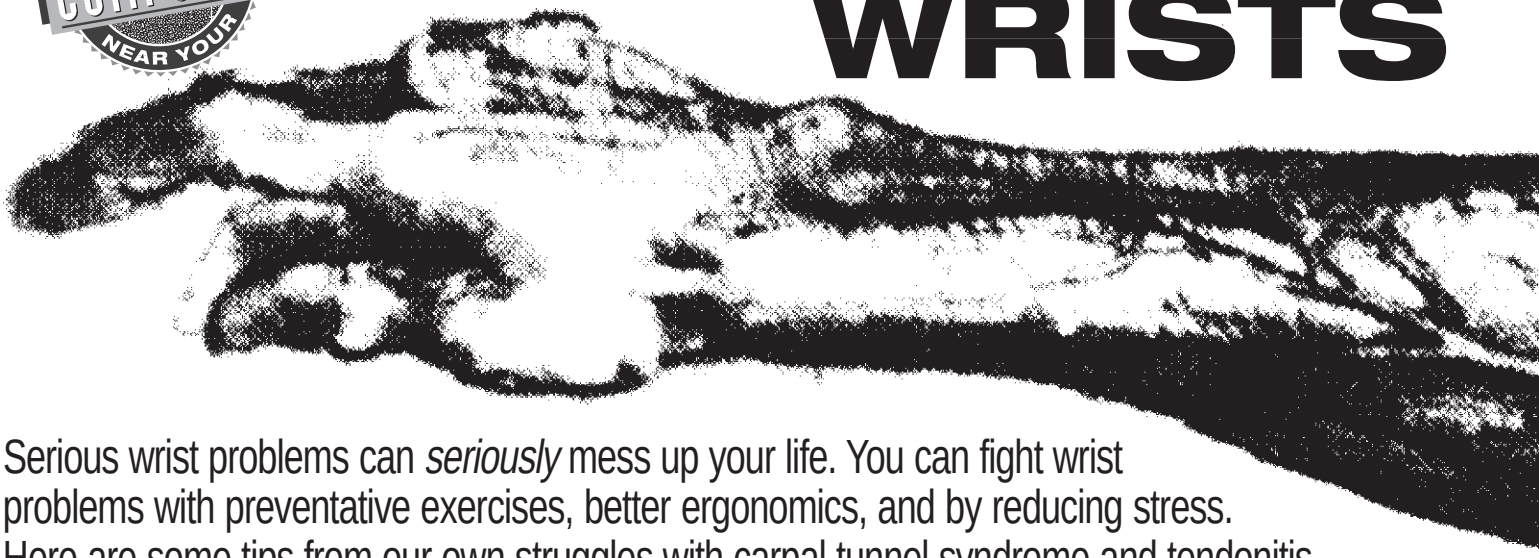

Serious wrist problems can *seriously* mess up your life. You can fight wrist problems with preventative exercises, better ergonomics, and by reducing stress. Here are some tips from our own struggles with carpal tunnel syndrome and tendonitis.

Adam & Tonya Engst, TidBITS editors

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Massage your hands, forearms and the muscles in your neck.

Evaluate your environment for ways to reduce stress.

Learn to change your reactions to unavoidable stress.

Ergonomics

Watch your posture.

Don't crane your head and shoulders forward.

Use a keyboard wrist rest properly.

Drink plenty of water regularly.

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Squeeze a soft ball.

Stretch and curl your fingers.

Drop your hands to your sides and shake them gently.

Breathe deeply, exhale slowly. Yawn.

Stretch your neck.

Rest your eyes.

Check the details on the back...

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